

RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS
SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Thursday, April 4, 1991

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Public Meeting - Drainage and Flood Control.
(County Administration Building, Hearing Rooms A,B, and C)

The Skagit County Board of Commissioners met in a special session on Thursday, April 4, 1991, with Commissioners W. W. Vaux, Ruth Wylie and Robby Robinson present.

The Board convened in Hearing Rooms A, B, and C of the County Administration Building, Mount Vernon, for a public meeting the purpose of which was to present a proposal for the formation of a county-wide drainage utility, and to gather public opinion on the proposal. Approximately 30 people attended.

Chairman Vaux introduced Dave Brookings, Flood Control Engineer.

Mr. Brookings reviewed drainage and flooding issues, beginning in the far eastern reaches of the County and extending westward to Fidalgo Island. He then reviewed the revenues available for flood and drainage improvements and maintenance of flood and drainage facilities. Twelve dike districts and 13 drainage districts produce revenues through taxes in amounts from \$6,000 to \$35,000 annually to address the dike and drainage facilities in their respective areas. Nine sub-flood control zones, for which the Board of County Commissioners acts as administrators, also produce revenues through taxes to address flood and drainage issues in their respective areas. The county-wide drainage utility would respect the role these districts play in flood and drainage control, and would not disturb their functions. The County Road Fund allots \$240,000 for drainage maintenance necessary to protect County Roads and is applied to projects outside the perimeter of the roads. The River Improvement Fund provides \$20,000 which is apportioned to the dike, drainage and sub-flood control districts through a grant program. One person, Mr. Brookings, makes up the staff of the Flood Control Division.

Mr. Brookings reviewed the components necessary to a comprehensive drainage program. Planning and studies should include the following steps:

- identify issues and solutions
- clarify jurisdictional roles
- develop a system to evaluate and prioritize projects
- identify maintenance needs
- facilitate compliance with Department of Ecology regulations
- set appropriate fees

Mr. Brookings explained that the staff has reviewed ways in which to fund this study and has the following options:

- sub-flood control zones and diking and drainage districts to cover the entire County. Does not deal with regional issues, but does compel everyone to participate.
- River Improvement Fund raised by a county-wide vote to exceed tax limit.
- Mitigation fees. These cannot alone provide a solution to water problems, as they can be used only to benefit whatever development pays them.
- Federal and State grants. These require matching funds of up to \$0.50 on each dollar raised through grant applications.
- County-wide drainage utility.

Mr. Brookings reviewed the State law pertaining to the County-wide drainage utility, which is being recommended as the option to pursue. The County-wide drainage utility can be formed by a vote of the

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Board of Commissioners. Initial assessments would fund the drainage study. The study would then identify how assessments should be made to fund future construction and maintenance projects based on the land use activity on the property. An initial assessment of \$10.00 per parcel has been suggested.

Finally, Mr. Brookings reviewed a timeline for planning and implementation.

Gerald Steele of Marblemount made several points:

- locally effected people should have to pay for naturally occurring drainage problems which are inherent to their property.
- When individuals take actions which effect others, there should be a special fee.
- When the past actions of others have caused drainage problems, these can be borne by a county-wide district.
- Different locations within the district should pay different fees, i.e., residents of already dense development should pay more than rural residents.

Mr. Steele offered to serve on a citizens advisory committee.

Jim Youngsman advocated dredging of the Skagit River. He support SB5411, the Bailey Bill, although he understands it has been entirely rewritten.

Bill Roozen supported the county-wide concept.

Chairman Vaux pointed out to the audience that the loss of timber tax funds will reduce the funds available to the County's public roads fund substantially.

Ken Slater of Mill Town Road, an owner of 19-/12 acres of open space land, felt there should be no taxes for the drainage or diking districts. He did, however, believe all should be taxed equally, stating that he owns three different parcels within the same area near Blodgett Road, two of them separated only be a road, and each pays a different assessment. He felt that it was unfair for homes on one side of a road to pay less than on the other, since both contribute to the drainage problems. Specifically, he felt Cascade Ridge development, which does not currently pay drainage taxes, should have to pay. He also noted that there is a drainage facility running through an easement on his property to benefit the Sky Ridge development, which also pays no tax.

Bob Dean, a dike commissioner and resident of West Mount Vernon, was in favor of the proposal. He, too, felt that upland residents contribute to lowland flooding and should have to help pay for the drainage of the lowlands. He did feel that the county-wide utility should respect the operations of the diking and drainage districts. He also thought that the tax should be based on assessed valuation.

Richard Smith, a Dike District #3 commissioner and resident of West Mount Vernon, felt that development and clearcutting on the hills south of Mount Vernon should help fund the drainage of the lowlands. He was in favor of the county-wide utility.

John Roozen, a West Mount Vernon farmer, was also in favor of the county-wide utility. He stated that a large and complex problem such as drainage requires study. To get the study in motion, it may be necessary to charge everyone, including the drainage and diking districts. Mr. Roozen related that his research shows that the river drops steeply east of Marblemount, but drops only 300 feet as it continues westward, and that there is more water traveling below the ground that above. He also learned that old growth forests absorb more water than second growth forests. Mr. Roozen felt strongly that the current dike

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and drainage districts should be retained.

Zel Young pointed out that too much drainage control will cause the need for irrigation in the summer. He stated that the drainage assessment should be managed like a poll tax.

Don Bockelman thought that the actions of the drainage utility should begin before the two year timeline demonstrated by Mr. Brookings. He stated that dredging of the Skagit should begin now by emergency declaration. He suggested that the hydroelectric dams be used as a funding source and that Skagit County liquidate a portion of its portfolio to fund the dredging operation.

Red Norris, a Sedro Woolley resident and sports fisherman, advocated the removal of stumps, snags and blockages along the river, and the use of a drag chain to clean the river bottom out. He pointed out that it will not help to clean out the creeks if the river is blocked. He was in favor of a county-wide assessment.

Herb Walter of South Mount Vernon, Chairman of Drainage District #17, was in favor of the proposal. He stated that the City of Mount Vernon contributes to the water problems faced by Drainage #17, but does not assist in paying for their facilities. He, too, encouraged the acceleration of the time line.

Wayne Carlson, who lives east of Mount Vernon, informed the Board that in an area with an average rainfall of 40 inches per year, only 22 inches reach the ground. Trees promote evaporation of 18 of the 22 inches, and what does reach the ground is absorbed by the thick ground cover, slowing the time it takes for the water to reach the groundwater table, which runs slowly. He stated that dams help to regulate the flow of water and should be encouraged. He suggested that owners of vacant land could be encouraged to forest their land, and that unforested land could be assessed at a higher rate. Agencies should encourage forest practices of a smaller scale over a longer period of time.

Commissioner Wylie pointed out that the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act allows no flood control measures on the Rivers designated under the act.

Keith Morrison, a South Mount Vernon farmer and Drainage District #17 commissioner, was in favor of the county-wide utility. He reminded the Board that the drainage and flooding problem is not focused only on the Skagit River.

Mr. Spahr brought the audience's attention to a questionnaire which had been made available, and explained the portion which asks if the respondent would be willing to be assessed a \$10 per parcel initial charge to fund a study, which will provide legally defensible rates for future tax assessments.

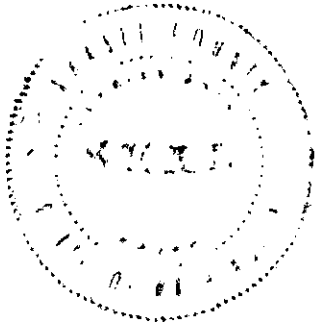
Answering a question from the audience, Mr. Brookings reported that the County has requested that the Army Corps of Engineers perform a reconnaissance study on the Skagit River Basin; however, the County has received no answer to the request yet.

Chairman Vaux thanked the audience for their participation and the meeting adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Wylie motioned to adjourn the proceedings. Commissioner Robinson seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON



W. W. Vaux

W. W. Vaux, Chairman

Robby Robinson

Robby Robinson, Commissioner

Ruth Wylie

Ruth Wylie, Commissioner

ATTEST:

Stephanie Wood

Stephanie Wood, Clerk
Skagit County Board of Commissioners