

**RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS
SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Wednesday, June 8, 1994

8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Executive Session - Personnel, Litigation and Land Acquisition.

1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. Discussion - Court Facilitator.

The Skagit County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Wednesday, June 8, 1994, with Commissioners Harvey Wolden, Robby Robinson and Robert Hart present.

DISCUSSION - COURT FACILITATOR.

Chairman Wolden opened the discussion concerning the possibility of creating a new position within the County to assist litigants who are not represented by attorneys but may need help or direction getting through the court system. Susan K. Cook, Court Administrator, briefly reviewed her proposal to find someone to help these people choose the proper paperwork, assist in filling out necessary documentation, and thereby ease the process. Ms. Cook advised that both Snohomish and Whatcom counties currently have an individual called a Court Facilitator who is available during the work week for litigants to seek assistance from. Ms. Cook stated that many times litigants make an appointment for the calendar only to appear with the improper paperwork. This is very time consuming for the litigants and Staff to reschedule hearings. Ms. Cook indicated that the process could be much more efficient for the residents of Skagit County.

Ms. Cook stated that there have been concerns expressed about these programs in that facilitators might be construed as able to give legal advice. The facilitator's intent is to only help litigants have the proper paperwork in place before coming to court. Ms. Cook further explained that this position will not spend a lot of extra tax dollars as a State statute allows a surcharge to be charged on certain fees currently collected to cover this expense. It is Ms. Cook's opinion that one day per week would be adequate to start, but could adjust this schedule accordingly.

Commissioner Hart noted that there are efficiencies to be gained.

A discussion ensued on the costs involved, the efficiencies to be gained, the advantages of bi-lingual abilities, and staff expense for handling the rescheduling of court times.

Commissioner Robinson expressed his concern of adding costs to the criminal justice system, but stated that he is in favor of becoming more efficient and cost effective.

Ms. Cook advised that in addition to salary and benefits, there would be a need for office space, desk, telephone and answering machine to avoid impacting other Staff members. Some degree of privacy would be required.

Dionne Clasen, Family Support Division, stated that she is very supportive of this proposal.

The Board indicated the need to give this proposal a try if a location can be found to house this person, together with the necessary telephone access.

Phyllis Coole-McKeehan, County Clerk, indicated that fees can be collected immediately if the Board indicates their approval of this process, but a public hearing may be necessary to institute the collection of these fees. Staff confirmed that a public hearing would be necessary.

RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS

June 8, 1994

Page Two

A brief discussion ensued on the problem of custody issues between parents when both parents are indigent and unable to pay for guardian ad litem investigations. Unfortunately, the County must bear the cost of these investigations if the parents are unable to afford such. Ms. Cook advised that the proposal is that Superior Court arrange a method of identifying the indigency of the parties and thereafter appoint guardians ad litem with a set fee and ceiling. The Board suggested that the Assigned Counsel criteria may be able to be utilized for this purpose, and further indicated their interest in setting limits.

Ms. Cook will submit a written proposal with details. Commissioner Hart indicated Gray Foster in the Assigned Counsel office may be of assistance in this regard.

ADJOURNMENT.

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

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON



Harvey Wolden

Harvey Wolden, Chairman

Robby Robinson

Robby Robinson, Commissioner

Robert Hart

Robert Hart, Commissioner

ATTEST:

Patti J. Owen

Patti J. Owen, Clerk
Skagit County Board of Commissioners