

RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS
SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Wednesday, September 3, 1997

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	Executive Session – Personnel, Litigation & Land Acquisition.
9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Work Session – Cell Towers in Unincorporated Skagit County.
*T 11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Presentation/Discussion Regarding Family Resource Center.
7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Discussion – E-911 Operational/Maintenance Costs.

The Skagit County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Wednesday, September 3, 1997, with Commissioners Harvey Wolden, Robert Hart and Ted W. Anderson present.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION REGARDING FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

Mike Woodmansee, County Administrator, stated that the County and four participating agencies are ready to finalize a real estate transaction for the purchase of the proposed Family Resource Center. He explained that the Board will be considering a resolution to issue bonds to finance this transaction in the near future.

Mr. Woodmansee noted that 20 months ago the County sponsored a CDBG application for the purpose of constructing or buying a building to be used as a Family Resource Center. The grant was approved and a suitable parcel was located. In May the County bought the building at 320 Pacific Place known as the Litchman Building. The building next to the Litchman Building was also available and the County also purchased that property subject to bringing all of the parties (County, Community Action Agency, HeadStart, SPARC and Catholic Community Services) together to agree on particulars of the buildings.

Mr. Woodmansee reviewed progress to date concerning the issuance of bonds. The amount is \$875,000. It is anticipated that it will be a 15 year bond and interest rates will be at the 5.3% average rate. Specifics of the financing were further explained by Mr. Woodmansee.

Mr. Woodmansee advised that the four outside agencies, three of which are present today, are agreeable to the terms of the lease that has been proposed. The lease would run for 10 years. The terms of the lease with the various agencies were briefly reviewed. The allocation of each agency's lease payments and share of utilities were detailed by Mr. Woodmansee, together with the duties of an oversight committee for the day-to-day operation of the building.

Mr. Woodmansee indicated that the lease will be reviewed more extensively by all of the agencies and by the County's legal counsel. The lease will come back before the Board within the next few weeks for consideration.

Joan Martin, Skagit Pre-School and Resource Center, expressed her happiness that this project is reaching fruition for the people of Skagit County. She indicated her appreciation for the support and patience of the Board.

Margy Miller, HeadStart Director for Skagit Valley College, stated that rarely do you find a group of agencies who really have their eye on the goal of services to families. There is a bit of trepidation to this project, but there is the willingness to work together. She indicated that this is a total County project.

Karen Parnell, Deputy Director of Skagit County Community Action Agency, indicated that this has been a very arduous process of 4-5 years, and has resulted in this solution. She stated that Mr. Woodmansee has worked very patiently and creatively, and that the Community Action Agency is ready to move forward with this project. She applauded the collaborative efforts of all of those involved.

Chairman Wolden stated that the group has demonstrated their vision of the future. The collaborative movement to get to this point has been outstanding. Chairman Wolden indicated that the lease answers all of the questions and puts a finalization to what is being attempted. He stated that, hopefully, this project will be an example for the State and the entire country. Chairman Wolden congratulated the group on their persistence and vision.

Commissioner Anderson congratulated Ms. Martin's efforts in pursuing this dream and refusing to let her dream die.

Commissioner Hart added his congratulations to the assembled group in forming this partnership with government to make a difference and benefit families.

Mr. Woodmansee briefly discussed the next steps in the process of implementation.

DISCUSSION – E-911 OPERATIONAL/MAINTENANCE COSTS.

Chairman Wolden opened the session and stated that he had been informed that the Fire Commissioners had requested this discussion with the Board.

Mike Woodmansee, County Administrator, reviewed the history of the Enhanced 911 and the consolidation of the dispatch functions for Skagit County.

Commissioner Hart asked for clarification of how the monies are paid for these functions. Mr. Woodmansee stated that most departments or districts have agreements with the City of Mount Vernon or the City of Anacortes to provide dispatch service. Old contracts will be cancelled and new contracts will be issued for the proposed new dollar amounts relative to the construction and maintenance of the new operations center.

Mr. Woodmansee explained that the allocation criteria is based on the proportion of calls to each district. The flat fee of \$2,500 per district was stated to be an attempt to put on paper the fact that there is a cost associated with just having the system in place.

The costs associated with a dispatch center, including the salaries of dispatchers were explained by Mr. Woodmansee. He further indicated that the districts present tonight had requested this audience with the Board to give their input on the fee allocation and other potential funding. Mr. Woodmansee explained that the Board has the authority to put an excess property tax levy measure on the ballot in November that would give registered voters a say of whether they want to tax themselves for a first class 911 dispatch center.

Chairman Wolden confirmed that the total funding for this project is approximately \$1.8 million.

Tom Sheahan, Skagit County Emergency Management, confirmed Mr. Woodmansee's framework of the current situation and stated that the Fire District Commissioners had requested this meeting to discuss budgeting of the dispatch center with the Board.

Gary Koski, Vice President of Skagit County Fire Commissioners Association, expressed his appreciation to the Board for allowing them to present their side of the story tonight. He stated that the Association would like to propose that the Board put an excess property tax levy to the voters of Skagit County to fully fund a 911 dispatch center. He went on to explain the difficulties in budgeting with increased monetary requirements from State and Federal levels. Mr. Koski further indicated that the goal of fire districts is to provide the best fire protection within their budgets. The current proposal is leaving districts with fewer tax dollars to provide or improve their services. Mr. Koski stated that the fire districts have virtually been ignored during this planning process. He indicated that he feels that taxpayers were under the impression that the cell phone surcharge would cover the costs of the E911 dispatch center. He stated that the dike districts, PUD and Puget Power should also be included in the calculations as they benefit from the assistance of the fire districts during storm and flood events.

Mr. Koski stated that early on the fire districts repeatedly asked for participation and were repeatedly refused participation.

Mr. Woodmansee stated that a five member Communications Board was formed to develop the budgeting proposal, and that one member was to be either a fire district commissioner or a rural fire chief. A rural fire chief was chosen and appointed by the Fire Technical Committee. Mr. Woodmansee further indicated that the County is not represented on the Communications Board, but that three cities are represented, Emergency Medical Services and a rural fire department chief.

Commissioner Anderson expressed his view that due to purported misunderstandings and in-fighting, perhaps the fairest avenue would be to put this before the citizens and ask them if they want to fund the excess costs. He stated that if we proceed with existent discontent, there will be a rocky road ahead.

A discussion ensued on composition of the Communications Board, the possibility of an excess tax levy and the amount that would be requested, and the responsibilities of elected officials.

Mr. Koski indicated that the Association passed a motion to make the proposal tonight to completely fund the \$1.8 million or fund the portion that is in excess of what the participants are currently paying for dispatch services. He stated this would be a one-year levy and would give the Association time to go to the State Associations to get something before the State Legislature for long-term funding. He gave examples of dispatch centers going broke within the State.

Commissioner Anderson stated that many people were under the impression that this enhanced service would actually save money. He further indicated that in some instances, this increase will completely wipe out some districts' entire budget.

A discussion ensued on the excess amount that would be needed to completely fund the new Center. Mr. Woodmansee indicated that the difference is \$400,000 to \$500,000, which includes the cities and Emergency Medical Services.

Commissioner Anderson stated that he would just as soon put it before the taxpayers and see if they will fund it. The continuing arguments and in-fighting have not solved any of the attendant problems of funding.

Jim Grove, District 13, encouraged the Board to put this before the voters for funding the entire amount.

Chairman Wolden asked the assembled group if they would considering bringing this proposal from the fire commissioners as group.

Ken Anderson, Skagit County Fire 2, President of the Fire Commissioners Association, stated that the proposal to put this to the voters is brought to the Board from the association, and is to collect the full \$1.8 million required for the dispatch center.

It was suggested by Chairman Wolden and Mr. Woodmansee that the Fire Commissioners Association should formally bring this proposal to the Board, signed by a majority of the fire districts.

The timing of the funding and budgetary process was briefly outlined by Mr. Woodmansee.

Mr. Sheahan briefly explained the overall situation with the various cities and their perspectives on putting this matter to a vote. He stated that the cities of Sedro Woolley and Anacortes were interested in seeing this proposal given to the voters, but the City of Mount Vernon has not taken a position. Mr. Sheahan indicated that in his opinion this is the right approach and the State will have to take some measures in the future to assist local jurisdictions. This action would be a bandaid until State assistance is forthcoming. Mr. Sheahan stated that careful consideration should be given to the amount we ask the voters to fund.

Dale Jenkins, Bay View, requested the Board not put the funding of the 911 program to the voters. He stated that the Fire District Association does not represent all of the fire commissioners of Skagit County, and that most Fire Commissioners do not attend the meetings because they feel they are not represented. He stated that many fire districts have not been good stewards of the taxpayers' monies, and always ask for their full levy amounts.

Commissioner Anderson again stated that the only fair way to resolve these issues is to put it to the voters.

Mr. Woodmansee stated the need to receive a position letter from a majority of the fire districts for the Board to take into account.

Commissioner Anderson stated that if the voters turn this down, they will be sending a message that the project needs to be scaled down or redesigned.

Doug Avery, District 13, stated that there has been in existence a referendum to roll back taxes and that it is going to happen. When it does, all fire districts will be in trouble. He expressed his frustration with increasing expenses that are mandated at the Federal and State level that the Fire Districts must absorb.

Commissioner Anderson reiterated that he is in full support of putting this to the voters.

Ken Anderson stated that at the meeting where this proposal was approved, 8 fire districts were represented.

Commissioner Hart stated that he would like to see if the cities are in favor of going out to the voters to see if they would be in agreement. Anacortes and Mount Vernon could significantly reduce their tax rates because they would be saving a considerable amount.

Commissioner Wolden stated that it will make a difference if Anacortes and Mount Vernon are against this excess tax levy, thereby making it difficult to obtain approval from the voters.

Commissioner Hart indicated that if we decide to put this on the ballot, we will need everyone's support. There will have to be an active campaign.

Mr. Koski stated that the Fire District Commissioners would work with Mr. Woodmansee to develop a proposal for the Board early next week.

MISCELLANEOUS.

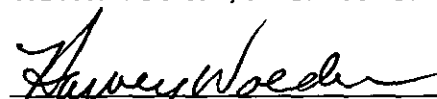
1. Staff presented a Vendor Services Agreement with Ducap Electronics, Inc. for relocating radios for the Department of Emergency Management for a not-to-exceed amount of \$6,000. Commissioner Anderson moved to approve the Agreement as presented by Staff. Commissioner Hart seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. **(Contract No. 003624)**
2. Staff presented a Notice of Road Closure for Old Highway 99 North, extending said closure through September 4, 1997. Commissioner Anderson moved to approve the Resolution as provided by Staff. Commissioner Hart seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. **(Resolution No. 16659)**

ADJOURNMENT.

Chairman Wolden made a motion to adjourn the proceedings. Commissioner Hart seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.



**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON**



Harvey Wolden, Chairman

Robert Hart, Commissioner



Ted W. Anderson, Commissioner

ATTEST:



Patti J. Chambers, Clerk of the Board
Skagit County Board of Commissioners