

**RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS
SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2009**

The Skagit County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, December 8, 2009, with Commissioners Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Sharon D. Dillon, and Ron Wesen present.

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Dahlstedt called the proceedings to order at 8:01 a.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Chairman Dahlstedt led the gallery in the salute to the flag.

III. AGENDA:

a) 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Skagit County Board of Health Meeting

1. Introductions of Staff Who Have Helped Make H1N1 Vaccines Available in Skagit County

Peter Browning, Director of Public Health, informed the Board that the Health Department has been successful in getting vaccinations out to the community. Mr. Browning thanked the staff for their work and he introduced Sandi Paciotti, Communicable Disease Manager, who thanked many people for their work during this H1N1 flu season. It was mentioned that the Medical Reserve Core was also a great help to the community.

2. H1N1 Update in Skagit County

Ms. Paciotti stated that since April 2009, there have been 98,000 confirmed cases of swine flu in the U.S. Of these confirmed cases, 4,000 people have died (234 of these have been children). The doses of H1N1 vaccine which Skagit County receives is divided between the doctors' offices, hospitals, and pharmacies. Approximately 17,000 people have been vaccinated in Skagit County, and of this number the Health Department vaccinated 6,000 people. The vaccine is free from the Health Department. The Health Department will be going to the Burlington Edison High School Cafeteria on December 12, 2009, at 9:00 a.m. to give the H1N1 flu vaccine to people 6 months and older.

Ms. Paciotti explained that there are two types of vaccines available to the public: the nasal spray and the inject-able vaccines. Pregnant women and young children also have an option to get a vaccine which does not contain thimerisol. The Health Department will be going to local Senior Centers to give the

vaccination to people 6 months and older. Once again, the vaccination is free.

The Commissioners thanked everyone for their work and stated that it was nice to see the utilization of willing volunteers.

3. Changes in Child and Family Health Services

Jennifer Sass-Walton, Child and Family Health Nurse Manager, was present to discuss changes in the department. The Foster Care Public Health Nurse Program is ending at the end of the year. It was helpful to gather health history information on each foster child and the program has been around for approximately 12 years, but the Washington State lost funding for this program. The Nurse Family Partnership Program is in limbo. Funds have been shifted and funding sources are being researched. The Maternity Support Services Program is also being cut by Washington State. This program has helped many first time mothers. The Health Department is also concerned about the family planning nurse that will no longer be at the Department of Social and Health Services. The Health Department believes it will see an increase in services to new mothers who were previously seeking direction by DSHS.

4. Clean Samish Initiative

Corinne Story, Environmental Public Health Manager, stated that the Clean Samish Initiative is a multi-agency partnership with the goal of lowering the fecal coliform levels. There is no substitute for one-on-one interaction with community but budget issues and position reassignments make it difficult to cover the work load. They are working on grants to help fund the work, and in order to maintain credibility within the community, we have to follow through. The entire Samish Watershed is a Marine Recovery Area and the current septic program is already 3 years into its 5 year project. The plan they have implemented is working. When a faulty septic system is located, the property owner receives warning letters first and then if the problem is not corrected, a fine is imposed.

Commissioner Dillon appreciates how the Health Department is handling the situation. We are encouraging people to do the right thing by talking to them and warning them before fining them outright.

5. Secure Medicine Return Bill

A Secure Medicine Return Bill is coming up this year. Will Reichardt, Chief Criminal Department of the Sheriff's Office, has been looking at the Snohomish County program. Receptacles

located at Police and Sheriff Offices and City Hall's are being looked into as secure medicine drop off locations. All medications need to stay out of our water systems and off of the streets. A State House Bill No. 1165 asks that providers of medications pay for gathering and disposing of any left over amounts. Mr. Browning stated that this medicine drop off program should not be any money out of our pockets. It will be watched and researched further, and Snohomish County's progress with the program will be watched.

6. Prioritization of Programs in Public Health

There have been funding shifts in the department. The Governor's budget will be in on Wednesday and a large part of the funds which Skagit County receives from the state is in limbo. Various funds are either being cut or reduced. The Health Department has to follow guidelines for each program it offers. If the program is funded and mandated it is implemented. If the program is mandated but not funded it is implemented at a safe level. And, many programs are not funded or mandated but they are programs that work well in our community. The Health Department is doing all they can to keep their budget balanced and take care of the community.

Commissioner Dillon is hoping to maintain current funding levels. Commissioner Wesen thanked the Health Department for their care of the citizens. Chairman Dahlstedt expressed frustration at the funding changes from the state. Mr. Browning thanked the Commissioners for their guidance.

Chairman Dahlstedt recessed the proceedings at 8:50 a.m.

b) 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. Public Hearing to Consider the Adoption of Skagit County's Budget for 2010

Chairman Dahlstedt reconvened the proceedings at 9:03 a.m.

Trisha Logue, Budget and Finance Director, gave a brief presentation of the 2010 budget. A timeline of the 2010 budget adoption process was outlined. In order to try to balance the budget the Commissioners are considering a levy shift, closure days, continued use of Operation and Maintenance funds, and no general wage adjustment for non-represented employees.

Commissioner Wesen and Dillon thanked Ms. Logue for her continued work on our budget. The Commissioners do their best to keep the budget balanced.

Chairman Dahlstedt opened the public hearing and stated that each speaker would have three minutes to speak due to the amount present

for the public hearing.

Corky Hundahl of 3224 Shelly Hill Road in Mount Vernon, expressed her shock at the news she received that Human Services was being absorbed by Senior Services. Ms. Hundahl owns Phoenix Recovery, LLC and has provided substance abuse treatment services to Skagit County since 2004. Ms. Hundahl reminded those present of Skagit County's innovative strategies regarding substance abuse treatment. The Justice Policy Institute reported a \$8.87 cost benefit for every \$1.00 spent on substance abuse treatment services. Ms. Hundahl stated that substance abuse treatment in the community cannot be cut and to please think about the re-organization.

Joe and Kelsey Hardy were present on behalf of Joy Caldwell and read a letter from Ms. Caldwell thanking the Commissioners for past programs.

Carol Ehlers of 3998 Windcrest Lane in Anacortes, requested that budget information be placed in Public Libraries once again. Ms. Ehlers also requested that property valuations be assessed before the budget and taxes are set. Ms. Ehlers wanted to share information about the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plan to do shoreline work. Our County already manages our shorelines and how is the County handling this new issue? Ms. Ehlers wanted to make sure that the County kept in mind the intellectual consideration of staff and appropriate back up and help in departments, she stated that a one day a month furlough sounded much better than laying people off.

Daniel Dempsey, Skagit County Coroner, was present to talk about his department's budget issues. He is concerned about the budget for his staff. His department is on-call, if staff are cut he will have no one to help him. He asked the Commissioners to please re-consider budget cuts to his department.

Ellen Bynum of La Conner, was present to discuss Skagit 21 public access television. Cable fees are going up on January 1, 2010. Public television access is an incredible value to the community. Ms. Bynum has worked with hundreds of television people and said that Rich and Dan are excellent at what they do. Ms. Bynum believes that cheap is expensive and that contracting these positions out would not be a good way to go. Ms. Bynum encouraged the Commissioners to meet with Skagit 21 staff and look at all the opportunities for generating revenue.

Jim Justice of 27103 Helmick Road in Sedro-Woolley, was present to discuss ARIS program cuts. He stated that the program was a godsend and it serves the most needy of our students and families. Mr. Justice was comparing the cuts of each department and noticed that the Human Services Department is taking a 50% cut, not a 5% cut which was asked of each department. He stated that money spent today on at-risk students for help and education will cost less down the road. He urged the Commissioners to keep ARIS alive.

Luz Cabrera of 2405 College Way in Mount Vernon, was present to say that she has seen the changes and help that the program has had with our youth. Ms. Cabrera works for Head Start through Skagit Valley College. She urged the Commissioners to consider the families.

Kathy Navarro of Skagit Valley College, urged the Commissioners to support the ARIS Program.

Lydia Byergo of 18840 Fishermans Loop in Burlington, was present to say that as an employee at Mount Vernon High School and as a bilingual advocate, she has concerns about how these decisions will affect students, the community, and believes that the community will suffer.

Francisca Gallegos of 1427 Alpine View Drive in Mount Vernon, was present to speak on behalf of ARIS and the Mount Vernon School District. She first saw ARIS at work with elementary level students. This service was available when students needed extra help and needed to get back on track. Every school counselor and teacher will feel a loss if this program ends. Ms. Gallegos stated that it would be devastating and the consequences serious.

Water Pfahl of Swan Road in Mount Vernon was not present to speak when his name was called.

Carol Thibeau of 12026 Bayhill Drive in Burlington, was present to say that the budget cuts in the county should be structured by cutting from the top down. And, she wondered if the Commissioners and other department heads were still taking a \$750 a month car allowance.

Authur Gallegos of 1427 Alpine View Drive in Mount Vernon, was present to ask that ARIS be focused on since it helps keep our youth out of the juvenile system. From his view as a taxpayer, he feels it is a good use of money.

Consuelo Guandique of 901 S. 21st Place in Mount Vernon, was present to comment on the ARIS cuts. Ms. Guandique was laid off from the department in May. She started with the County in 2008 and saw first hand what ARIS did. All ARIS intervention specialists receive referrals from the local school districts. ARIS is overwhelmed with requests from K - 12 grades. Issues include CPS cases of abuse and neglect, gang problems, help with substance abuse, and mental health services. ARIS helped connect clients with services and appointments. Ms. Guandique stated that as a taxpayer and community member we have to help our youth.

Greg Merrill of 1361 McLeal Road in Bellingham, was present to let the Commissioners know that he is a social worker in Skagit County and is impressed by the one-tenth of one percent of sales tax funds that go towards a variety of mental health programs. Mr. Merrill urged

the Commissioners to keep this program in place, and to be sure to keep the programs intact and effective, and not to water them down.

Kyle McInnis of 321 N 30th Street in Mount Vernon, was present to share with the Board the importance of the ARIS program to his family and to the community. Mr. McInnis' father passed away when he was six years old and changed his family's lives. He and his brothers had a very hard time and had an excuse to live a mediocre life, but ARIS stepped in to help hold him and his brothers to a higher standard. They worked with the family and helped tremendously. Mr. McInnis believes that if the ARIS program is cut, it will leave an ugly mark on Skagit County.

Don Munks, Skagit County Assessor, was present to discuss how Washington State mandates many of the services that Skagit County provides, and that when we receive a new mandated service, the State usually provides a way to fund it. Sometimes the State will mandate a new service without funding specifics and what the County normally does is take funds from various line items to cover the costs. Mr. Munks believes that the County should not spread specific cuts throughout programs but keep it to the program it pertains to so that when our citizens come to voice concerns about cut programs, the Commissioners can refer them to Olympia to ask directly ask the law makers why they cut funding.

Kelley Kjarstad of 16535 S. Wall Street in Mount Vernon, was present to let the Commissioners know that her daughter was recommended to ARIS Program when she was young. She needed help and ARIS stepped in and helped tremendously. Ms. Kjarstad participated in parenting classes and she now works for the school district. Ms. Kjarstad stated that if ARIS had not been there to help, her daughter may not be a "A" "B" graduating student, and it worries her to see other children in school who will still need help from a program like ARIS.

Karen McInnis of 321 N 30th Street in Mount Vernon, was present to let the Commissioners know that ARIS helped her family through difficult times and that there are no other comparable programs in Skagit County. Ms. McInnis' three sons were referred to ARIS and ARIS helped the entire family. Ms. McInnis stated that her family has come a long way: all of her sons have graduated, are employed, and are registered voters. Two of her sons volunteer at ARIS and without ARIS, her family would not have thrived or grown. Ms. McInnis wanted to speak up on behalf of Skagit County's children because the ARIS program has been proven and benefited so many. Ms. McInnis urged the Commissioners to find a way for ARIS to continue.

Ann Novak of the Catholic Community Services program, was present to point out to the Commissioners that in our schools and community, there is a shortage of people who are able to work with Spanish speaking clients and ARIS can. ARIS staff are highly skilled and supportive of families and other professionals. They are a helpful resource and need

continued support.

Seeing no further public testimony forthcoming, Commissioner Dillon made a motion to close the public hearing, which was seconded by Commissioner Wesen. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Dillon thanked everyone for coming. She stated that the budget situation is not going to get any better, that these programs are important, and that ARIS is a wonderful program, however, there is only so much money to go around. Skagit County has seven murder cases that have to be brought to trial and resolved. There are many mandated programs that have to be funded. She stated that the decisions that have been made are not personal and that their choices are slim. Commissioner Dillon thanked Trisha Logue, the management team, and the other Commissioners.

Commissioner Wesen also thanked everyone for coming. Skagit County has lost people and the programs also have to be looked at. Cuts have to be made. 70% of the revenue goes towards paying employees and benefits, and when this is thought of, one of the places where cuts have to be made is with employees and benefits. Commissioner Wesen appreciates the character of the employees, something you find out about when you are going through this type of stress.

Chairman Dahlstedt appreciates the help and support given by his fellow Commissioners. He appreciates the comments from today. He is a big advocate of partnerships and he pointed out that the schools provide \$50,000 towards the ARIS program and Skagit County provides \$600,000. Skagit County would love to better partner with the schools and he urged everyone to go talk to the schools to come up with the funding. Many people get upset when it seems like only workers are laid off and not managers. Chairman Dahlstedt said that the only way managers can be laid off are when departments are consolidated. This task is difficult and it helps to work together. Chairman Dahlstedt urged everyone to buy items here in Skagit County. When people shop online and go out of county, the funds leave our county. It is something important to consider.

Chairman Dahlstedt recessed the proceedings at 10:19 a.m.

c) **10:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. Presentation on the U.S. Census for 2010**

LaVerne Lamoureux was present from the U.S. Census Bureau to discuss the importance of the 2010 Census. One of the most important things to remember is that funds for services are dispersed according to the data collected at each census. Ms. Lamoureux wanted to let everyone know that they will help any resident who needs assistance completing the form and she stated that the information which is collected is confidential. Ms. Lamoureux described the forms included in the packets for the Commissioners. Extra questionnaire forms will be available throughout the county located at "Be Counted" sites. March 19, 2010, through April

19, 2010, centers will be open and staffed by people readily available to help with filling out forms and answering questions. In January 2010, a media campaign will begin in our area.

The Commissioners realize importance of the 2010 census, and Commissioner Wesen read a Proclamation regarding Partnering with the U.S. Census Bureau.

Tim Holloran, County Administrator, thanked Ms. Lamoureux and stated that the County will help make sure that the Census count is complete.

Chairman Dahlstedt recessed the proceedings at 10:37 a.m.

d) 11:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. Public Comment Period

Chairman Dahlstedt reconvened the proceedings and opened the public comment period at 11:30 a.m.

Ellen Bynum of La Conner, was present to comment further on the untapped benefits of Skagit 21 Public Television programming. Ms. Bynum believes that Skagit 21 could provide revenue to the county, that the service is essential to the public, and that Emergency Medical Services and other departments could be using this more for outreach purposes.

Carol Ehlers of Anacortes, was present to show support of what Ms. Bynum was saying. Ms. Ehlers also wanted to inform the Commissioners of The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plan to take over management of our beaches. She attended one of their meetings and learned that they did not know about the other entities which are already managing the Shorelines. Ms. Ehlers went on to comment on drainage utility restrictions, fees, and issues that Bay View Ridge is having with drainage. She requested that the Commissioners think, plan, and eliminate the existing drainage problems.

Seeing no further public testimony forthcoming, Commissioner Dillon made a motion to close the public comment period, which was seconded by Commissioner Wesen. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Dahlstedt adjourned the proceedings at 11:45 a.m.

e) *1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Skagit Council of Government: Growth Management Steering Committee Meeting

IV. MISCELLANEOUS:

1) Ryan Walters, Civil Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, brought forward a ER 408 Protected Settlement Agreement, which the Commissioner's signed, between Skagit County and Skagit County Growthwatch, Citizens to Protect Bay View Ridge, Friends of Skagit County, and Gerald Steel.

A motion was made by Commissioner Dillon to approve the signing of the Settlement Agreement with Skagit County Growthwatch, Citizens to Protect Bay View Ridge, Friends of Skagit County, and Gerald Steel. Commissioner Wesen

seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Dahlstedt adjourned the proceedings at 11:45 a.m.

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Chairman

Sharon D. Dillon, Commissioner

Ron Wesen, Commissioner

ATTEST:

Linda Hammons, Clerk of the Board
Skagit County Board of Commissioners