

**RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS
SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2010**

The Skagit County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, September 21, 2010, with Commissioners Sharon D. Dillon, Ron Wesen, and Kenneth A. Dahlstedt present.

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Dillon called the proceedings to order at 8:30 a.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Chair Dillon led the gallery in the salute to the flag.

III. AGENDA:

- a) **8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Proclamation - September, October and November as United Way Campaign Months in Skagit County**

Chair Dillon introduced Debra Lancaster, Executive Director of Skagit County United Way and Maureen Lama, third vice president and 2010 Skagit County United Way Campaign Chair. Ms. Lancaster stated that United Way is halfway through their annual campaign. She pointed to the United Way "thermometer" which showed a total of \$520,000 received so far. 52% of their goal has been met. Ms. Lancaster announced that this morning, Puget Sound Energy announced an increase in their gift from \$10,500 to \$60,500. The campaign theme this year is "More than a Million" and they have \$430,000 left to raise.

Commissioner Wesen apologized for missing the kickoff breakfast. He is a donor, and he stated that he appreciates all that United Way does to support over thirty local organizations and their volunteers, while keeping administrative costs very low. A volunteer committee decides where funds are dispersed. Community donors have faith in United Way's ability to get funds to the organizations that need help the most.

Chair Dillon appreciates the ease of writing one check, or contributing by a regular payroll deduction. She is proud to support this diverse group of Skagit County agencies. The Commissioners challenge Skagit County employees to give generously, and Chair Dillon stated that they always step up to the plate. United Way should be proud of achieving a high percentage of fund donations in the early part of their campaign. She welcomed Debra Lancaster as the new Skagit County United Way Executive Director.

Commissioner Dahlstedt read the list of thirty-two agencies and programs that receive funding through United Way: The American Red Cross - Islands & Mt. Baker Chapters; Anacortes Community Shelter Project; Boy Scouts of America – Mt. Baker Council; Bread of Life Food

Bank; Camp Fire USA – Samish Council; Catholic Community Services WW-NW; Chinook Enterprises; Compass Health; Concrete Food Bank; Girl Scouts of Western Washington; Ideas for Living; Meals on Wheels; Mount Vernon Community Wellness Council; North Cascades Health Council; Northwest Youth Services; Reverie Outreach; Retired Senior Volunteer Program (R.S.V.P); Sea Mar Community Health Centers; Secret Harbor; Skagit Adult Day Care; Skagit Council on Aging; Skagit County Community Action Agency; Skagit Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services; Skagit Habitat for Humanity; Skagit Valley Family Support Center; Skagit Valley Family YMCA; SPARC (Skagit Preschool and Resource Center); The Landing; Visiting Nurse Home Care; Volunteers of America; and YouthNet. These agencies have been inundated with people in need this year, and these organizations make up a tremendous network of agencies which helps our neighbors.

Commissioner Dahlstedt has been privileged to serve on the United Way Board for the last two years, and was the Campaign Chair last year. He personally thanked other County employees who also have helped, including Tim Holloran, Peter Browning, Dan Berentson, and other County staff. He also thanked Commissioners Wesen and Dillon for participating at the Red Feather level, which is an annual donation level of \$500 or more. All those who can help are challenged to donate. The Commissioners thanked Ms. Lancaster and Ms. Lama for their hard work. Our country will be saved by neighbors helping neighbors, which is what United Way is all about.

Commissioner Dahlstedt read the proclamation announcing the United Way Campaign in Skagit County, during the months of September, October and November, 2010.

Commissioner Dahlstedt then challenged his City partners to get involved in helping United Way since many of those in need live in our cities and towns here in Skagit County.

Chair Dillon recessed the proceedings at 8:41 a.m.

b) 9:00 a.m. - 9:15 a.m. Discussion/Possible Action: Skagit County Risk Management Policy Manual

Chair Dillon reconvened the proceedings at 9:00 a.m.

Billie Kadrmas, Director of Human Resources and Risk Management, introduced Sharon DuBois, Safety and Training Technician. Ms. Kadrmas stated that they have met individually with the Commissioners about the Risk Management and Safety Guidelines. This has been an ongoing project to update the guidelines and policies, and the documents have been presented to the Commissioners for review. Sharon DuBois has already answered some of the Commissioners questions. Safety in the County was discussed as well as Risk Management's role. These updated

guidelines, once finalized, will be available to Skagit County employees both on-line and in printed format. These guidelines will continue to be updated as rules and regulations change. The Resolution to adopt these updated guidelines was presented yesterday as Item No. 13 on the Consent Agenda.

The Commissioners were given copies of the statement of the Skagit County Safety Policy, which they were asked to sign, and which will be included in the booklet showing their support for the safety of employees and citizens of Skagit County. The Commissioners were thanked for their continued support of safety and the Risk Management program.

Commissioner Dahlstedt stated that he was pleased that Skagit County now had a Risk Management Policy Manual. He commented that he had served in a lot of organizations that did not have clear policies and, unfortunately, had problems when trouble arose. He thanked Risk Management for keeping the county on task and making sure appropriate information is available for our employees and partners. It is in everyone's best interest that we clearly understand the risks and our responsibilities.

Commissioner Wesen thanked Ms. Kadrmas and Ms. DuBois for the work involved in updating the guidelines. People often get complacent in their routines and need to be reminded about the rules for protection of employees and citizens. They need to be reviewed by all in order to make sure things are being done correctly. This is done for the protection of the citizens of Skagit County, to avoid potential risks, injuries, and lawsuits.

Chair Dillon thanked Ms. Kadrmas and Ms. DuBois and commented that these are rules and regulations, but that the focus is not to restrict people from doing things, but instead to avoid injuries, and to keep everyone safe. Skagit County operates in a lot of different venues including ferries and lakeside parks. In our daily work, safety should always come first.

A motion was made by Commissioner Wesen to approve the Commissioners signing the statement for the Skagit County Safety Policy. Commissioner Dahlstedt seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously.

Chair Dillon recessed the proceedings at 9:22 a.m.

- c) 9:30 a.m. -10:00 a.m. **Work Session/Discussion: Department of Natural Resources - Update on Transfer of Forest Board Lands**

Chair Dillon reconvened the proceedings at 9:31 a.m.

Ben Cleveland, Acting Region Manager for the Northwest Region of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) stated that he was here to answer questions and

update the Commissioners on the Blanchard acquisitions. He introduced Paul McFarland, of the Land Transactions Division.

Mr. McFarland commented on the illustration on the overhead display showing the Blanchard area acquisitions. Mr. McFarland stated that priorities were set for DNR by the Blanchard Strategies Group and the Memorandum of Understanding among the group members. The top priority for DNR was acquisitions within the Burlington-Edison School District. The second priority was County-wide acquisitions. This initiative started two to three years ago, and they began to look for suitable properties for management as forest land, find willing sellers as well as areas that would not block existing State Forest Trust Land.

Mr. McFarland showed the Commissioners different views of the Burlington-Edison School District and the existing State and County Forest Trust Land. He discussed suitability and management challenges which would come with acquisition of certain parcels which includes neighborhood development and conflicting land uses such as adjacent residential use. Another view of the school district was shown with purple areas being good candidate properties for acquisition. In total there are about 1,130 acres in the school district controlled by seven different land owners. When DNR started the initiative, they reached out to the land owners to see who would participate in this program. The proposition was discussed with numerous owners, county-wide, including six of the seven candidate properties in the school district. Some contacts have been from DNR's initiative, and some owners have contacted DNR because the word got out. Of all the contacts, eight qualifying projects have been generated, with the prospect of selling to DNR. Three of these are in the School District, and five are outside. Two of those in the district were unsuccessful, and one resulted in a successful purchase. Of the five outside, two contacts were unsuccessful, there was one completed acquisition, one the board of Natural Resources approved acquisition, and one is still pending.

Views were shown of three Blanchard acquisitions that have either closed or been approved by the Board of Natural Resources. The "Blanchard South Project" includes 80 acres. It closed in March, 2009. The "Alder Ranch Project" near Hamilton includes 830 acres. It closed in December, 2009. "Stimson Greens" near Lake Cavanaugh, has been approved by the Board of Natural Resources in September, but has not yet closed. It includes 85 acres south of the Skagit County line (in Snohomish County). It was apparent to the DNR that part of this project would be funded by other than the Blanchard appropriation. There are three funding sources that are tagged as possibilities.

Chair Dillon asked for clarification of the colors in the photos. Mr. McFarland responded that in the photos, blue is state forest trust, and pink is "granted trust" (03 and other). In the Stimson Greens photo, orange is other trust. In the Blanchard south photo, the purple shows Chuckanut State Park. Green shows the Blanchard core zone, circa 2007, whenever the Strategies Group completed their work. It was designed so that it may evolve in size or shape over time, but this is how it was then.

Mr. McFarland continued with the DNR's approach to acquisitions in general. An appraisal is performed to a property's highest and best use (as determined by an appraiser as part of the assignment). The appraiser's opinion of the market value is

the value sought. There are a number of other approaches, but generally DNR partners with willing sellers on appraisal work, allowing them to share in the cost and the information provided by the appraisal. This is the most transparent method to negotiate the price. Mr. McFarland stated that this has been done on each of the properties. Some have been successful, while others have not. In some cases, the partners decided not to partner with DNR. This includes the two cases in the school district. In one case, they shared an appraisal on an entire property, but it became apparent early on that the parties were too far apart in value, to continue negotiations.

Commissioner Wesen asked Mr. Cleveland for a history of the Blanchard Core Zone. Mr. Cleveland deferred the question to Kendra Smith as a better historian. His expertise is in moving forward. He has formed the Blanchard Forest Advisory Group, which will be meeting at the end of this month. One of their charges is to look at the Core Zone and see that the boundaries are where intended, with the map confirmed by foresters going out on the ground. The Core Zone is currently estimated to be 1,674 acres. The group will advise DNR on management activities and determine whether the Core Zone is correctly established (where the activities will primarily consist of timber sales and recreation).

Kendra Smith, Natural Resources Policy Coordinator, discussed the history of the Blanchard Core Zone. The process with Blanchard started years ago under Commissioner Sutherland, and Regional Director Bill Wallace, who put together a committee called the Blanchard Mountain Strategy Group. Ten members were chosen, from Conservation Northwest, the timber industry, Backcountry Horsemen, Friends of Blanchard Mountain, the Land Trust, and other entities. Ms. Smith participated from the perspective of the Land Trust. They met eleven times to determine what should happen on Blanchard Mountain. The successful outcome designated a Core Area of about 1,600 acres, which was not to be harvested. The remainder could continue in timber harvest. The Core Area was to be saved by the Land Trust. Part of the agreement was that they would go to work with the legislators to find \$11 million dollars for the estimated timber value to offset the costs. They found \$5 million dollars, and said they would have a five-year limit, but they wanted to be sure the Burlington-Edison School District would be "made whole". From that, there were signed agreements from all the parties. Unfortunately, there was a lawsuit, and they had to delay actions. The next step was putting the Advisory Board together. Now DNR is moving forward, and the first meeting is on September 30th. The basis for action was set up in the strategy sessions.

Commissioner Dahlstedt stated that there are ongoing discussions across the state about these trusts which were set up for the schools to generate revenue. Over time, a lot of recreational uses and other partners were added who utilized the land. This generated a lot of discussion over the highest and best use. Commissioner Dahlstedt stated that he thinks Commissioner Sutherland was trying to be respectful and find a compromise to bring all the groups together. The County has had a great working relationship with DNR. The hard part is when some chose to start a legal battle. The Commissioners appreciate DNR's commitment to work toward the spirit of the agreement with limited resources for land acquisition. The Commissioners offered help in working with property owners. Skagit County can challenge our taxpayers, but whatever gets paid needs to

have solid justification.

Mr. McFarland thanked Commissioner Dahlstedt, and stated that DNR is committed to those goals, and will continue to focus their efforts in the school district. They will continue to talk with the property owners that they have not been successful with. If there are other resources or efforts available it would be appreciated.

Chair Dillon stated that the County needs to work with what has been given us. None of those present were here when the Trust lands were established. Skagit County appreciates DNR coming to the table for the negotiations, and their efforts in trying to make that particular Trust, and the school district, whole. The County understands that negotiations are difficult, and as Commissioner Dahlstedt said, let us know if we can help. Chair Dillon stated that we do not want conversion; and we are committed to keeping our forest lands forested in Skagit County.

Commissioner Wesen thanked Mr. McFarland and Mr. Cleveland for their participation. He stated that they were both on the Blanchard Mountain last Friday and could see the Wesen's farm below. A lot of new houses can also be seen. With the County's population estimated to double in the next fifty years, there will be pressure to build more housing. We need to do all we can to protect what we have now, as residential property values will increase. The decisions made on purchasing land are long-lasting. Those involved need to do what they can to keep this property in the School District, and keep the timber there.

Mr. Cleveland thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity and promised to keep them informed on the challenges as they move forward. He appreciates the offer of help.

Chair Dillon thanked them, first for coming on Friday to Blanchard Mountain, and also for being on Skagit 21 TV today in order to share with the constituents what is going on. She invited them to come back, to discuss Blanchard, and the other areas they are involved with in Skagit County.

Commissioner Dahlstedt added his thanks to Commissioner Goldmark for taking the time to visit Skagit County. The partnership with DNR is appreciated and is important to the County.

Chair Dillon recessed the proceedings at 9:54 a.m.

- d) 10:00 a.m. -10:30 a.m. Presentation by the Skagit County Libraries

Chair Dillon reconvened the proceedings at 10:00 a.m.

Maggie Buckholz, Director of the Burlington Public Library, started the presentation by stating that libraries are very important in our communities. "Libraries" means books, literacy, and the internet. Library users describe them as essential, inspirational, and indispensable. Libraries are closely connected to our communities, and are a welcoming place. 600,000 people came through library doors in 2009. Libraries are the friendly face of government, and serve Skagit County constituents every day.

The core services provided by today's libraries are essential. Ms. Buckholz stated that they are a portal for lifelong education, and a place for self-directed education. Libraries provide more than books; there are computers, language labs, exam proctoring for distance learners, and space for tutors and students to meet. It is estimated that Librarians answer, on average, about ten questions per hour, providing research assistance and instruction, job resources, homework support, computer training, and connections to government resources. They advise readers as to content and format of information, and they teach information literacy, which is how to distinguish credible and trustworthy sources. Libraries provide instructional programming and literacy experiences for all ages from babies to seniors. There are story times for infants and young children, services to the visually or hearing impaired, learning opportunities to gain fluency in other languages, and seminars for cultural enrichment. Libraries offer a level of service not available anywhere else in our County, and it is offered to everyone.

Ms. Buckholz stated that in order to operate, libraries must leverage resources from many different sources. There is limited support from library "Friends" groups, service clubs, and private contributors. They thank the Commissioners for their continued annual support.

Tim Van Dyken of the Burlington Police Department, Jeffrey Hill of La Conner, Scott Corea of the Mount Vernon City Library Board, and Brian Soneda, Director of the Mount Vernon Public Library all spoke to how libraries have helped and enriched them in their work and time off, and spoke of the importance of libraries in our community.

The Commissioners realize that valuable resources can be found and are offered at our libraries. They would like to see a countywide system in place. Many citizens turn to the library for help and funding for our libraries needs to be committed.

Chair Dillon recessed the proceedings at 10:31 a.m.

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

Chair Dillon reconvened the proceedings at 11:30 a.m.

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

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Dillon adjourned the proceedings at 11:32 a.m.

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

Sharon D. Dillon, Chair

Ron Wesen, Commissioner

Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Commissioner

ATTEST:

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