

**RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS
SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY, MARCH 22, 2011**

The Skagit County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, March 22, 2011, with Commissioners Ron Wesen, Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, and Sharon D. Dillon present.

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Wesen called the proceedings to order at 8:30 a.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

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

III. AGENDA:

a) 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Public Works: Henry Hash, Director:

1. Decision: Regarding the Establishment of the 2011 Guemes Island Ferry Fare Structure and Rescinding Resolution R20080577)

Henry Hash, Director of Public Works, stated that he was present to answer any questions the Commissioners may have before making their decision on the changes to the Guemes Island fare schedule.

Commissioner Dahlstedt stated that ferries are a challenge state wide and that Public Works staff works hard to provide good service at a fair price while balancing everyone's needs. He thanked Mr. Hash, Ms. Beck, and Ms. Henry for their work and stated that he was ready to make a decision.

Commissioner Dillon stated that she was also ready to make a decision. She thanked the Ferry Committee for their cooperative work on the fares and said that she appreciated seeing the Chair of the Ferry Committee sit next to the Public Works Director at the public hearing on Tuesday, March 15, 2011.

Chairman Wesen said that he understands those living on Guemes Island want Skagit County to look at ways to cut costs and the Commissioners have heard their request. He discussed some of the ways that some of the individuals will be job sharing.

A motion was made by Commissioner Dahlstedt to approve the resolution regarding the establishment of the 2011 Guemes Island Ferry fare structure and rescind resolution R20080577. (**Resolution No. R20110099**) Commissioner Dillon seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously.

Mr. Hash thanked the Commissioners, Public Works staff, and the Ferry Committee. He said that he was pleased that everyone came to an

understanding and wanted to point out that the fare for the Guemes Island Ferry was one of the lowest fares in the State of Washington.

Chairman Wesen announced that a public forum meeting would be held on Guemes Island on Thursday, March 24, 2011 at 5:30 p.m. Chairman Wesen recessed the proceedings at 8:37 a.m.

2. Miscellaneous

Mr. Hash stated that there were no miscellaneous items to discuss.

b) 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. Washington State University Cooperative Extension - Update on Workshops

Chairman Wesen reconvened the proceedings at 9:30 a.m.

Don McMoran, Interim Director, introduced William Freitas, Joan DeVries, Kari Russom, Diana Weisman, and Kay Haaland, who briefed the Commissioners on their workshops and activities in the community.

William Freitas, 4-H Coordinator, shared information regarding the annual youth conference: Know Your Government. Mr. Freitas stated that participants learn about the inner workings of government, leadership skills, and citizenship. Mr. Freitas invited the Commissioners to attend the conference next year. Samantha Brown, 4-H participant; Jodi Brown, 4-H parent; and Benjamin Janicki, past 4-H participant; all shared their experiences from the Know Your Government conference and how 4-H has enhanced their lives.

Joan DeVries, Livestock Advisors Program Coordinator, briefed the Commissioners on the success of the Country Living Expo and Cattlemen's Winter school. She said that there were approximately 1,150 attendees that took advantage of the variety of classes offered. She shared that the next Country Living Expo will be held January 28, 2012 and she invited the Commissioners to attend.

Kari Russom and Diana Weisman, of the Master Gardener's Program, were present to discuss the Master Gardener's program with the Commissioners. Ms. Russom stated that twenty-two students graduated from last year's program. Ms. Russom stated that the trend in the county has changed from learning and helping with landscaping to learning and helping with food production. She also said that they now have a Junior Master Gardener's program. Ms. Russom said that their annual plant sale will be on May 7, 2011. Diana Weisman shared a book with the Commissioners and informed them that most insects found in the garden are beneficial. She discussed some of the workshops coming up and shared that they have radio spots and classes held at local libraries. Ms. Weisman said that the Master Gardener's had a booth at the recent Skagit Island Counties Builders Association (SICBA) Home Show and it was estimated that they spoke to 300 individuals. Ms. Weisman said that they are looking forward to the fair in order to continue educating people about their gardens. Ms. Weisman ended by sharing a letter they received from a gentleman who wrote to thank them for changing his life by teaching him how to grow strawberries.

Mr. McMoran, shared information on the 2010 Sustainable Small Farming and Ranching course. Mr. McMoran said that most of the telephone calls he would get when he first started at the extension center were questions about how to farm which is why these farming and ranching courses were started. Mr. McMoran said that they are taught in English and in Spanish and that the classes also include office administration sessions. Mr. McMoran shared some of the other agricultural classes and opportunities with the Commissioners including the: Agricultural Entrepreneurship and Business Planning course, Viva Farms (which now has an incubator and walk-in cooler), Bi-County Farm Finance Workshop, Western Washington Potato Workshop. Mr. McMoran encouraged the Commissioners and other county employees to purchase a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) food box from Viva Farms. More information can be found at vivafarms.org. Mr. McMoran informed the Commissioners on some changes in leadership at the Washington State University (WSU) Extension Center within the Beach Watcher program and Dairy Faculty. Mr. McMoran also shared that he has been the Interim Director of the center since Ned Zaugg's retirement, but that Kay Haaland would be the new full-time director starting on April 1, 2011.

Kay Haaland shared with the Commissioners that she was looking forward to this position since she gets to work with wonderful people who provide valuable information and help to the community.

The Commissioners thanked everyone for the presentation. They also thanked Mr. McMoran for his time as Interim Director and congratulated Ms. Haaland on her appointment to the position.

Chairman Wesen recessed the proceedings at 10:20 a.m.

c) 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Planning and Development Services - Gary Christensen, Director:

1. Public Hearing: Consider Testimony Regarding Permit & Development Fee Change Proposal for 2011

Chairman Wesen opened the public hearing at 10:41 a.m.

Randy Good of Sedro-Woolley, opposed the proposed fee changes for appealing to the Board of Commissioners and Hearing Examiner. He shared his feelings with the Commissioners that it is hard to get a fair ruling from the county on certain matters since the county attorney can change ordinances in order to respond to issues presented within the department. Mr. Good went on to discuss problems he has encountered with staff within the Planning and Development department and felt that communication between staff and citizens needed to improve. Mr. Good ended by saying that he compared Skagit County's fees to nearby counties and said that the current fees are already \$200 more than neighboring counties, and Mr. Good wanted to remind county staff that they are servants to the citizens of the county and that these proposed increases are not warranted.

Jeff Miller of Mount Vernon, was present to share his concerns regarding the proposed increase to appeal fees as well. He was worried that increases to

these fees would create a barrier to those who may need to appeal certain matters. Mr. Miller felt that the increased fees would mean that many citizens would not be able to exercise their constitutional rights to due process. Mr. Miller stated that he reviewed all of the proposed changes and believed that they all made sense except to the change to the appellant fees.

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

Commissioner Dillon said that she was glad that people came to share their views with them and that the Commissioners would consider their comments before making a decision.

Mr. Christensen asked that the Commissioners continue to take written comments until the end of the business day.

Commissioner Dahlstedt stated the Commissioners would agree to accept written comments until the end of the day. Commissioner Dahlstedt thanked everyone for coming and he said that they try to balance the needs of the department with the needs of the applicants and expectations of the voters. Commissioner Dahlstedt stated that the Planning and Development department had not updated their fees since 2007 and that he requested that they do their best to only make small increases. Commissioner Dahlstedt said that he understood that the proposed changes would help the department cover the actual costs of issuing permits.

Chairman Wesen asked if the department would make any significant revenue from the proposed change.

Mr. Dowe stated that the department is not in the business of making money but of covering costs. He stated that any costs that are not covered by fees collected by applicants end up being paid for by the rest of the taxpayers. Mr. Dowe said that it is difficult to predict revenue but he supposed that there would be a modest gain.

Chairman Wesen stated that it would be important to consider the comments received regarding the increased appellant fees.

Commissioner Dahlstedt wanted everyone to know that every department looks for efficiencies and that staff at Planning and Development is down by one-third. Twelve positions have been cut and the department does its best to keep costs down.

A motion was made by Commissioner Dillon to approve that the Commissioners consider the proposed fees and make a decision on Tuesday, March 29, 2011, at 8:30 a.m., and to allow written comments through the end of the day. Commissioner Dahlstedt seconded the motion.

The vote passed unanimously.

Chairman Wesen recessed the proceedings at 10:55 a.m.

2. Miscellaneous

Mr. Christensen stated that there were no miscellaneous items for Planning and Development Services to discuss.

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

Chairman Wesen reconvened the proceedings at 11:30 a.m. No one was present.

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Wesen adjourned the proceedings at 11:37 a.m.

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

Ron Wesen, Chairman

Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Commissioner

Sharon D. Dillon, Commissioner

ATTEST:

Linda Hammons, Clerk of the Board