

DISCLAIMER: This document contains the Whatcom County Council or Committee minutes, as approved. However, unless an attested signature page is attached, they are not the final approved minutes.

1 WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
2 **Finance and Administrative Services Committee**
3

4 July 12, 2005
5

6 Committee Chair L. Ward Nelson called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. in
7 the Council Chambers, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham, Washington.
8

9 Present:

10 Sam Crawford

11 Sharon Roy
12

Absent:

None

13 Also Present:

14 Laurie Caskey-Schreiber

15 Seth Fleetwood

16 Dan McShane
17
18

19 **COMMITTEE DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL**
20

21 **1. ORDINANCE CREATING A FUND TITLED "REAL ESTATE EXCISE TAX**
22 **ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGY FUND" (AB2005-267)**
23

24 Barbara Cory, Treasurer, stated this bill was passed during the most recent
25 legislative session. It is a process for Treasurers to transfer real estate documents
26 and deeds electronically among the Treasurer, Auditor, Assessor, and title
27 companies. This became a Governor's bill after it was submitted to the State.
28 Things ended up in the bill that weren't what they wanted. There are a number of
29 problems in the bill they're hoping to correct next year. This ordinance creates a
30 fee on every excise transaction for the technology fund, to be used to create an
31 electronic process in about five years.
32

33 The County sends the money to the State, and the State sends it back based
34 on population. Seventy-five percent of the monies are divided equally among the
35 counties, and 25 percent of the monies are divided among the counties based on
36 population. According to the legislation, all counties can apply to the State for a
37 grant, but it wasn't included in the State budget process. That is a fix that will
38 have to occur next year. The fee increase started on July 1.
39

40 Crawford stated there is currently a \$2 fee. Cory stated that fee is on tax-
41 exempt transactions.
42

43 Crawford asked if all they're talking about is increasing that fee to \$5. Cory
44 stated it is. The fee for non-taxable transactions will be \$5. The fee for taxable
45 transactions less than \$5 will be \$15. The fee for taxable transactions over \$5 will
46 be an additional \$5. It's a flat fee.
47

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1 Crawford asked the amount of revenue collected by and for Whatcom
2 County. Cory stated Whatcom County can keep a small portion of the fee. The
3 nontaxable transaction fee automatically is kept in the County for the current
4 expense fund. The \$5 fee from the taxable transactions under \$5 goes into the
5 County's technology fund. A total of \$15 will be collected on those. Typically, there
6 are few of those transactions each year. It's a seller's tax.

7
8 Crawford asked the amount of the revenue collected. Cory stated the
9 Treasurer's Association estimate about \$200,000 per county.

10
11 Nelson asked about the new section that states no county is eligible for
12 grants totaling more than \$100,000. Cory stated that's just for the State money,
13 which is in addition to the \$200,000. The County must provide information on
14 excise tax collections to the State. The State wants the information to be provided
15 electronically. If the County does provide information electronically, the State will
16 pay for the process.

17
18 ***Roy moved*** to recommend approval to the full Council.

19
20 Crawford stated this was a State law that was passed. He asked what
21 happens if the County doesn't do it. Cory stated she doesn't know what would
22 happen. She needs a fund to deposit the money.

23
24 Nelson stated there was not overwhelming support for the bill by either
25 House or Senate. Cory stated that is because it became a Governor's bill, the vote
26 ran along political lines.

27
28 ***Motion carried unanimously.***

29
30
31 **COUNCIL "CONSENT AGENDA" ITEM**

32
33 **1. REQUEST AUTHORIZATION FOR THE EXECUTIVE TO ENTER INTO A**
34 **SUB-RECIPIENT AGREEMENT BETWEEN WHATCOM COUNTY AND THE**
35 **NOOKSACK INDIAN TRIBE NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT FOR**
36 **WRIA 1 FISH PASSAGE BARRIER INVENTORY – PHASE 2, IN THE**
37 **AMOUNT OF \$169,400 WITH THE WHATCOM COUNTY SHARE FROM**
38 **COUNTY ROAD FUNDS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$42,350 (AB2005-271)**

39
40 John Thompson, Senior Planner, stated the County received a Salmon
41 Recovery Funding (SRF) Board grant three years ago to inventory culverts and
42 drainage structures that block fish passage. The inventory is complete. There is
43 some grant money left over. The grant scope of work allows additional work to
44 move the priority blockages closer to being fixed. Staff went through the request
45 for qualifications (RFQ) process. The Nooksack Tribe and Nooksack Salmon
46 Enhancement Association (NSEA) came out as the top candidates.

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1 Four things will be accomplished. The contractor will work with the County
2 and salmon co-managers to work on the priorities in the recovery plan. Second,
3 the contractor will check with landowners that own the barriers to see if they are
4 still willing to work with the County. This is a voluntary process. They will also
5 gather additional data, if landowners are willing. Based on that information, the
6 contractor will put together a preferred design. Once that's agreed to, final designs
7 and necessary permit applications will be prepared. The contractor will provide a
8 way to find additional funding. This agreement gives the County, landowner, or
9 whoever the tools to fix the problem.

10
11 Nelson asked if the scope of work is to fix at least 20 culverts. Thompson
12 stated they will work on up to 20 culverts. He doesn't know exactly how many yet.

13
14 Nelson asked if staff went out to contract because the County doesn't have
15 the personnel to do this. Thompson stated that's correct.

16
17 Nelson asked if the Tribe is subcontracting this contract to NSEA. Thompson
18 stated it is.

19
20 Nelson asked if the Tribe will supervise NSEA's work. Thompson stated it
21 will.

22
23 Nelson asked what the County does. Thompson stated the County will
24 review all the products and will participate in all meetings to set priorities. The
25 Tribe will provide weekly progress reports and a monthly invoice and report. Staff
26 will track the project weekly.

27
28 Nelson asked the training and salary that NSEA staff will have. Thompson
29 stated it's the going rate for displaced natural resource workers. The training is on
30 the State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) criteria that evaluates whether
31 or not a culvert is a barrier.

32
33 Roy stated the end product is not necessarily repair, but a specific plan for
34 each culvert that needs repair. Then, they have to look for additional funding to do
35 the work. Thompson stated that is correct. This grant is an assessment grant. It
36 doesn't allow for repair. They will move as many culverts forward in the planning
37 process as possible.

38
39 Roy asked if they can use road funds to fix culverts. Thompson stated they
40 can.

41
42 Caskey-Schreiber stated this is a good project that will save the County time
43 and money. The cost is not much, in proportion to what the County has spent
44 getting agreements from landowners in the past. These outfits have good
45 reputations for working with the public.

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1 **Nelson moved** to recommend approval to the full Council. He would like to
2 know more specifically what they are getting, not "up to 20 barriers." Thompson
3 stated that language had to be flexible, depending on how many property owners
4 agree. They estimate fixing 15 to 20, based on the feedback from Nooksack and
5 NSEA.

6
7 **Motion carried unanimously.**

- 8
9 **2. REQUEST AUTHORIZATION FOR THE EXECUTIVE TO ENTER INTO**
10 **COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN WHATCOM COUNTY AND THE**
11 **U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS FOR REHABILITATION OF NON-**
12 **FEDERAL FLOOD CONTROL WORK FOR THE SANDE-WILLIAMS LEVEE**
13 **NEAR DEMING, AND THE BLYSMA AND HANNEGAN LEVEES NEAR**
14 **LYNDEN, IN THE AMOUNT OF \$126,500 WITH THE WHATCOM**
15 **COUNTY SHARE IN THE AMOUNT OF \$25,300 (AB2005-272)**

16
17 **Nelson moved** to recommend approval to the full Council.

18
19 Paula Cooper, River and Flood Division Manager, stated there is a correction.
20 The agenda page isn't correct. The correct amounts are the totals shown on the
21 bottom of Council packet page 56. The total amendment is \$130,300, for a total
22 contract amount of \$651,500

23
24 **Motion carried unanimously.**

- 25
26 **3. REQUEST AUTHORIZATION FOR THE EXECUTIVE TO ENTER INTO A**
27 **STOP GRANT BETWEEN WHATCOM COUNTY AND DOMESTIC**
28 **VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES (DVSAS) ADVOCACY**
29 **SERVICES TO PROVIDE SERVICES IN THE COURT'S CIVIL DOMESTIC**
30 **VIOLENCE PROTECTION ORDER OFFICE, IN THE AMOUNT OF \$20,000**
31 **(AB2005-273)**

32
33 **Crawford moved** to recommend approval to the full Council.

34
35 **Motion carried unanimously.**

- 36
37 **4. REQUEST AUTHORIZATION FOR THE EXECUTIVE TO ENTER INTO A**
38 **FIVE-YEAR CONTRACT FOR SERVICES AGREEMENT BETWEEN**
39 **WHATCOM COUNTY AND SIEMENS BUILDING TECHNOLOGIES, INC.**
40 **FOR ENERGY SYSTEMS TECHNICAL SUPPORT, IN THE AMOUNT OF**
41 **\$87,360 (AB2005-274)**

42
43 **Roy moved** to recommend approval to the full Council.

44
45 Crawford asked what the services are for and the current status.

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1 Dewey Desler, Deputy Administrator, stated the heating, ventilation, and air
2 conditioning (HVAC) systems in all buildings have sophisticated computer controls.
3 The County uses a good software application. It pays about \$16,000 to \$17,000
4 per year for computers and controls.

5
6 Nelson stated there is a mechanic rate. Desler stated mechanical work
7 occurs. If there are significant breakdowns, the County may hire other firms.

8
9 *Motion carried unanimously.*

10
11 **5. REQUEST AUTHORIZATION FOR THE EXECUTIVE TO ENTER INTO AN**
12 **AMENDMENT TO AGREEMENT BETWEEN WHATCOM COUNTY AND**
13 **WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH FOR DELIVERY OF**
14 **PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES IN WHATCOM COUNTY, IN THE AMOUNT**
15 **OF \$196,769, FOR A TOTAL AMENDED AMOUNT OF \$1,630,200**
16 **(AB2005-275)**

17
18 Nelson asked if the contract changes are due to the fiscal year differences
19 between the County and the State.

20
21 Janet Davis, Community Health Manager, stated they are. This is the end of
22 the State's biennium. This is the Health Department's main source of funding from
23 the State Department of Health. These contracts are based on ongoing contracts.

24
25 *Nelson moved* to recommend approval to the full Council.

26
27 *Motion carried unanimously.*

28
29 **6. REQUEST AUTHORIZATION FOR THE EXECUTIVE TO APPROVE THE**
30 **PURCHASE OF MAIL BALLOTS FROM THE SOLE SOURCE PROVIDER,**
31 **K&H INTEGRATED, IN THE APPROXIMATE AMOUNT OF \$54,000**
32 **(AB2005-276)**

33
34 *Crawford moved* to recommend approval to the full Council.

35
36 *Motion carried unanimously.*

37
38 Caskey-Schreiber stated the price seems low, since it's for both the primary
39 and general elections.

40
41 **7. RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING COUNTY ROAD PROJECT NO. 902011,**
42 **HUTCHINSON CREEK BRIDGE NO. 157 REPLACEMENT, AND REQUEST**
43 **AUTHORIZATION FOR THE EXECUTIVE TO AWARD CONTRACT TO**
44 **WILDER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY AS LOW BIDDER IN THE AMOUNT**
45 **OF \$573,672.50 (AB2005-277)**

46
47 Nelson asked if this goes to a double lane.

1
2 Joe Rutan, County Road Engineer, stated there is currently a double lane
3 bridge. The bridge will have wider lanes and shoulders. The bridge is on the
4 southern end of Mosquito Lake Road. It is not the main steel structure, which is on
5 the six-year plan for rehabilitation. It will remain a one-lane bridge. Given the
6 traffic volume, it would be too expensive to widen it to a two-lane bridge.

7
8 **Crawford** stated 100 percent of the cost is covered by federal funds. Rutan
9 stated the bid came in nine percent above the engineer's estimate, due to the cost
10 of steel and fuel.

11
12 Crawford asked about local project funding. Rutan stated that was some of
13 the preliminary engineering work. The construction contract is funded 100 percent.

14
15 **Crawford moved** to recommend approval to the full Council.

16
17 **Motion carried unanimously.**

18
19
20 **OTHER BUSINESS**

21
22 **1. DISCUSSION REGARDING THE NEWLY PROPOSED EMERGENCY**
23 **MEDICAL SERVICES RECOMMENDED PLAN (AB2005-155A)**

24
25 Dewey Desler, Deputy Administrator, asked the councilmembers to read the
26 plan put together from a community committee. The group reviewed the entire
27 system to design a system that meets the fundamental needs of the community,
28 without excess, for the next six to seven years. He listed key elements of the plan,
29 including maintaining paramedic services for those in need, enhancing involvement
30 from all districts, organizing a phase-in approach for service demand, and
31 constructing an ambulance and emergency management services (EMS) advisory
32 board.

33
34 The plan is to spend down reserves to maintain services over next two years.
35 It calls for the County and City to contribute the same amount as before, plus small
36 increases each year. The plan also asks the Council to put a measure before the
37 voters to cover the overall deficit that will occur. The options for additional funding
38 are the one-tenth of one percent sales tax increase or a \$.14 levy, which is a two-
39 thirds reduction from the \$.385 levy proposed to the voters in 2003. The plan
40 contains a few other recommendations.

41
42 The administration will ask the Council to adopt a resolution in support of the
43 plan and other things. The resolution is consistent with past resolutions the Council
44 has approved. The community will look to the Council for its leadership on this
45 matter. The administration will assist the Council in that effort. The administration
46 will meet with groups in the community to talk about the issues, problems, and
47 future concerns.

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1
2 Caskey-Schreiber thanked Mr. Desler for working on this issue. He's worked
3 to get agreement from all interested parties. Citizens in the County really value
4 this service. Put forth the County's best efforts to make people understand that the
5 service will go away without additional funding. This is a major decrease from what
6 the County originally asked for. This will provide the minimum coverage that
7 assures it will be safe to travel in the county. She would appreciate
8 recommendations on when to put this before the voters.
9

10 Desler stated they have been working very hard on this issue. He is pleased
11 that many people have worked together. They must pull together all various
12 potential providers around a consistent mission to sustain the service. If the voters
13 don't approve this, they won't have the same service that exists today. There will
14 be fewer paramedics and more basic level of service (BLS) services.
15

16 The one-tenth of one percent sales tax increase is an option given to the
17 counties by the legislature. It must be approved by the voters, in the September or
18 November election, and one-third of it has to be devoted to law and justice. It
19 requires a further split so that 60 percent overall goes to the County and 40 percent
20 goes to cities. If that is the measure to go to the voters, the County must get an
21 interlocal agreement with all cities to devote that money to EMS over the long term.
22 If they go with a property tax, which is the less preferred recommendation, the
23 County Council can put it on the ballot at any time. The administration is not
24 proposing an EMS levy, but to tell voters that all money collected with the levy lid
25 lift would be devoted to EMS.
26

27 Nelson stated his major concern is formulation of how the EMS system will
28 look in the future. The current system was patched together to maintain the level
29 of service the people want. It was never intended to be permanent. He asked the
30 procedure for informing the citizens of the limited resources and rising cost of this
31 service, and that the current system can't be sustained. Desler stated they have
32 made so many investments in the system that it would be irresponsible to walk
33 away from them. Build on those investments instead. The County and City
34 originally each put up about \$30,000 in 1975 to develop a well-funded Medicare
35 and Medicaid system, which used to pay for the cost. Two-thirds of all the calls
36 received serve people on Medicare and Medicaid. Now, Medicare and Medicaid no
37 longer pays the cost of ambulance services. Instead, Medicare and Medicaid will
38 only pay a certain amount for each call, and doesn't allow Medic One to collect the
39 rest of the cost from the patient. Therefore, there must be another revenue source
40 to pay for the total cost. That is one reason why the physicians in the community
41 can no longer afford to serve Medicare and Medicaid clients without shifting the
42 total cost elsewhere, such as the private payer or taxpayer. The 25 percent of the
43 folks who have private insurance are the only folks who pay the full cost. They are
44 the only other service recipient to whom they can charge that deficit, but there isn't
45 enough people to charge them fairly. Over the years, the City and County have
46 said they will cover that deficit.
47

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1 The legislature gave authority to emergency services the right of mandatory
2 interest arbitration. If they can't come to a settlement during labor negotiations,
3 the negotiation goes to mediation and then an arbitrator. To a certain extent, the
4 County doesn't have control over the cost of service. That is another issue the
5 public must know about. A series of laws, events, and reimbursement issues have
6 created this situation. When comparing this system to other counties in the state,
7 this is a less expensive service system to the voters than in the other counties.

8
9 Nelson asked if the administration is dedicated to preserving the existing
10 system with the hope of continued levies or taxes, or if there will be a coordinated
11 system to move toward. Desler stated the administration recommends that all BLS
12 calls be answered by fire districts and fire departments. Focus the trained
13 paramedic resources on the most critical cases. That will save money. Now, they
14 send a paramedic response to everyone. They can still provide paramedic response
15 to meet the needs of the community, but they don't have to add capacity at the
16 rate initially proposed. This proposal delays the fifth medic unit to 2010. Future
17 paramedic units will be add as population grows, but aid will grow with the fire
18 districts. Medic one will no longer provide BLS response to calls in Bellingham. The
19 Bellingham Fire Department will respond to BLS calls, using existing capacity. The
20 request to the public is a two-thirds reduction. With the combination of revenue
21 reduction, increasing call volume, and aging population, they have to figure out a
22 different way to structure the payments for the more expensive service. It is a
23 more unified, efficient system.

24
25
26 **ADJOURN**

27
28 The meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

29
30
31
32 _____
33 Jill Nixon, Minutes Transcription

34
35 ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

36
37
38
39
40 _____
41 Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

L. Ward Nelson, Committee Chair