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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
Special Committee Of The Whole

October 28, 2008

Council Member L. Ward Nelson called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham, Washington.

<u>Present:</u>	<u>Absent:</u>
Barbara Brenner	None
Bob Kelly	
Sam Crawford	
Seth Fleetwood	
Laurie Caskey-Schreiber	
Carl Weimer	

1. ORDINANCE ADOPTING THE 2009/2010 WHATCOM COUNTY BUDGET (AB2008-227E)

Health

Regina Delahunt, Health Department Director, stated most public health jurisdictions across the state will experience lost funding in 2009. They are working with the State legislature, but it doesn't look successful. Other counties will have to eliminate employees to make up budget shortfalls. The Whatcom County Health Department had to reduce its budget by \$1 million. She has tried to minimize impacts to services. She doesn't recommend big cuts in major programs. Instead, they reduced the budget across the department however they could. They made cuts or increased revenue in environmental health, parent and child health, clinical services, human services, and administration. Revenue enhancements include fee increases, mostly to environmental health. Also, use funding from funds other than general funds. She described the fee increases, operating transfers, and cost reductions submitted as additional services requests (ASR's).

Brenner stated she would like information on the justification for onsite septic (OSS) system re-inspection fee.

Caskey-Schreiber asked for a list of all expenses that will come out of the mental health and substance abuse tax fund.

Dewey Desler, Deputy Administrator, stated the expenses planned so far include half of a position in the Health Department that has been re-crafted in the amount of \$45,000 and \$217,000 for the cost of three drug court case managers.

Marianne Caldwell, Administrative Services Department, stated the estimate for drug court is a net figure. The actual expenditures are over \$400,000. They receive funding from other sources besides the mental health tax fund. The net cost to that mental health tax fund will be \$217,000. There is also \$156,000 to pay back a cash flow loan and interest to the general fund. Therefore, it is \$45,000 for the Health Department staff and \$217,000 for the drug court staff per year, for a total of \$262,000 per year, or \$524,000 for two years. Add \$156,000 to that amount for the one-time loan payback amount.

1 Crawford asked how they can use the mental health tax fund to pay for existing
2 programs. It is not supposed to supplant existing programs. Desler stated the funds can
3 supplant programs that were funded with federal funds that have lapsed.

4
5 Delahunt continued to describe cost reductions in the form of reduced staff.

6
7 Brenner asked for information on all the positions they're eliminating and the amount
8 of money they would save per position. She would also like information on proposed fee
9 changes.

10
11 Caskey-Schreiber stated they already have that information.

12
13 *(Clerk's Note: End of tape one, side A.)*

14
15 Nelson asked about how the Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare Access (WAHA) has
16 been working, what the results have been, and how a downturn in the economy could affect
17 their results.

18
19 Kerry Lenderman, Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare Access Executive Director, stated
20 more people from the community have been asking about insurance services and
21 connection to healthcare services. This year, they will serve 46 percent more clients. More
22 people are out of work and need help with securing insurance. In general, people have a
23 hard time accessing healthcare services.

24
25 The \$25,000 reduction is the equivalent of one staff person who provides care
26 connection services. Those funds could be used to get 50 percent matching funds from
27 Medicaid. She described the tasks for a care connection staff person.

28
29 Nelson asked the total full-time equivalent (FTE) positions used for HIV and TB care.
30 Delahunt stated they will have to shuffle duties around to cover all the different services.
31 They have about seven TB cases per year in the community. Public health and Whatcom
32 County have total responsibility for TB care. There is no State funding for TB response. It's
33 a very time intensive program. She described the TB response program. They will still be
34 able to do TB monitoring with the reduction. They will have to shift duties around. They
35 will look at the program to see if they can cut back on latent cases of TB.

36
37 Nelson asked if the Health Department could require those with TB to come to the
38 department for dosage monitoring, rather than staff traveling to their homes. Delahunt
39 stated they could, but often those people don't have transportation. It's a difficult
40 population to serve.

41
42 Crawford asked if the public will perceive a different level of service when accessing
43 Health Department services. Delahunt stated they are making two staff cuts in clerical
44 staff. People who come to the reception area may experience a slower response.

45
46 Crawford stated fees for onsite septic design review of new construction are
47 scheduled to go up. Now, the response time on that is great. He asked if people will see
48 that service slow down. Delahunt stated they shouldn't see a slow-down in service. The
49 number of permit applications being submitted is down. They should be able to handle that
50 level of service.

51
52 They propose a net decrease of five full-time staff. However, all of those positions
53 are vacant now, and have been for awhile. In addition to those, other positions are also

1 vacant due to the hiring freeze and other employment issues. At this point, they are short-
2 staffed. She hopes to fill vacant positions when the hiring freeze is over. With all these
3 vacancies, level of service is vacant until the frozen positions are filled.
4

5 Crawford stated the Health Department is one of the best-managed departments in
6 the County.
7

8 Caskey-Schreiber asked about vetting expenditures from the mental health sales tax
9 through an advisory committee. They will hire a manager position, which will put the
10 advisory committee together, and then the committee will make recommendations on how
11 to spend the rest of the funds. Delahunt stated that's correct.
12

13 Caskey-Schreiber stated she would like a written legal opinion that it's okay to use
14 these funds as planned in the 2009-2010 Budget.
15

16 Prosecuting Attorney and Law Library 17

18 Dave McEachran, Prosecuting Attorney, stated he only submitted reduction ASR's.
19 He described his increased revenues and decreased expenses, caseloads, and case trends.
20

21 Fleetwood stated the Deputy Prosecutor caseload exceeds the level in which they can
22 effectively handle cases. He asks if that fact has any bearing on Mr. McEachran's
23 prosecutorial discretion, in terms of deciding whether or not to file a case. McEachran
24 stated one reaches a point where it does make a difference. They handle cases in many
25 different ways, including check diversion and drug court. Most cases have to go through the
26 process. They always look for alternatives.
27

28 Fleetwood asked the reason why District Court filings have increased. McEachran
29 stated there have been incremental increases in law enforcement agencies. That results in
30 increases in his department. As time goes on and the population increases, they are going
31 to continue to see that level increase. That area is increasing more than any other.
32

33 Brenner asked if Mr. McEachran accepts cases from other jurisdictions for District
34 Court. McEachran stated he doesn't accept those cases. He handles all the State Patrol and
35 Sheriff's Office cases through District Court. Cases originating within a city is handled by
36 municipal court.
37

38 Brenner asked if they get a lot of felony cases from cities that may require a lesser
39 charge. McEachran stated he decides what to charge those cases. District Court matters,
40 such as domestic violence and driving under the influence (DUI) charges, are charged by
41 the offices.
42

43 Brenner stated she's said that civil prosecutions are far down on the priority list
44 because they have their hands full with felony charges and other serious charges. She
45 asked if she's saying the right thing to people. McEachran stated she is talking about the
46 right thing, in terms of enforcing certain County ordinances. Enforcing County ordinances is
47 very difficult for him to do. When there is a fine, they really have to question whether it is
48 cost-effective to spend prosecutor time to collect a small fine. For some of those
49 ordinances, the effort and time it takes aren't worth it given the result if they win.
50

51 Brenner asked if Mr. McEachran can ask his civil prosecutors to give the County
52 Council some recommendations. McEachran stated he can.
53

1 Caskey-Schreiber asked if they will fill the victim witness coordinator position.
2 McEachran stated a legal support staff will fulfill some of those duties. They will address
3 those needs as best as they can. The victim fund revenue is increasing, so they hope to
4 support that position.
5

6 McEachran continued to report on the Law Library ASR. This year, they will have to
7 seek a supplemental budget request to use revenue they have coming that was more than
8 anticipated, to keep their flow of books.
9

10 Nelson asked if they are going to start using computer information rather than books
11 to reduce costs. Subscription costs have gone down. Attorney visits to the library have
12 decreased. He asked who is using the library. McEachran stated many people are doing
13 pro se matters. They have cut the number of books down as much as possible. Many
14 private citizens use the law library. Many attorneys still use the library for some resources.
15

16 Nelson asked if the intent of the law library was for attorneys in the community or
17 the public. McEachran stated the intent was initially for attorneys and County employees.
18 They have been able to open the library to the public. That use has grown.
19

20 Nelson asked if they can transfer the law library over to the public library, since it's
21 mostly the public who deals with it. McEachran stated the County is required to fund a law
22 library. They can open it to the general public, but it's primarily for attorneys, judges, and
23 County personnel.
24

25 Nelson stated the statute was probably designed before there were computers.
26 Technology is getting better and better. He asked if they can address this legislatively or
27 transfer the service to the public library. McEachran stated it would take a legislative
28 decision to make that change. There is a public need for access to the materials.
29

30 Nelson stated the public would have better access to the materials in the public
31 library, which is open for longer hours than the law library. He asked if attorneys really use
32 the library. McEachran stated attorneys use the law library.
33

34 Fleetwood stated he uses it. He sees lots of lawyers using the library.
35

36 Public Defender

37
38 Fleetwood asked about one less FTE.
39

40 Jon Komorowski, Public Defender, stated he made the 3.6 percent budget cut. They
41 are down 1 FTE attorney and a .5 FTE investigator.
42

43 *(Clerk's Note: End of tape one, side B.)*
44

45 Fleetwood asked if they are close to having inadequate representation due to
46 caseloads.
47

48 Komorowski stated they are okay right now. Typically they can do better than State
49 standards because of the high quality of personnel and the good working relationship with
50 Mr. McEachran's office and the courts. Theoretically, he is not supposed to have a caseload.
51 Civil commits have increased dramatically. He is scheduled to do 315 of those himself this
52 year. The standard for a full time attorney is 250 cases. He also runs the office, handles
53 homicide cases, and is handling 86 fugitive matters. In a perfect world, he'd have more

1 staff than he does now. However, they're able to do the job with what he has now. They
2 are able to do the job now more efficiently thanks to the staff who help him run the office
3 more efficiently. They've dramatically cut down on the number of conflict cases going out of
4 the office without compromising their representation. They have applied the rules of
5 professional conduct and conflict case law more scrupulously. He worked closely with
6 County administration. They're doing a very good job of representing their clientele.

7
8 Crawford asked how they like being in the new work space. Komorowski stated
9 being outside the courthouse helps them gain credibility with their clients. It helps with
10 morale.

11
12 Nelson stated he likes to hear that they use management skills to create efficiencies,
13 so the workload is handled. That's commendable. He asked about the positions being cut,
14 as shown on ASR 2009-4255. Komorowski stated he's had considerable turnover in the
15 Public Defender's Office for a variety of reasons. Rather than bringing in lateral hires, he's
16 been in favor of hiring lower level attorneys, sometimes fresh out of law school, who have
17 demonstrated a commitment to and can grow with his office. That has resulted in cost
18 savings. They've been hiring Attorney I personnel instead of Senior Attorneys.

19
20 Brenner stated she thought some of the legal cases for civil commitment were
21 supposed to be done by another county. Komorowski stated there are no beds available
22 when people are involuntarily committed. The number of commitments are skyrocketing.
23 The hospital in Olympia was shut down due to damage from an earthquake, and those beds
24 are no longer available. They refuse to accept referrals from other counties, which may be
25 illegal.

26
27 Brenner stated Whatcom County is part of a regional system. She thought the
28 regional system applied for something.

29
30 Nelson stated that has been dropped.

31
32 McEachran stated Skagit County had vied for more beds. However, the Skagit
33 County Prosecutor quit handling those cases anymore because of his caseload. It's a
34 mandatory duty of a Prosecutor. Five counties are involved in the region, and they've met.
35 He believes that effort will get back on track. It won't help Whatcom County at all. He
36 described the commitment process.

37
38 Parks

39
40 Mike McFarland, Parks and Recreation Department Director, described his increased
41 revenues and decreased expenses.

42
43 Brenner asked how many park rangers they have all together. McFarland stated
44 there are three lead rangers and three park rangers. Two of the six rangers would be
45 reduced to .7 FTE and one of the six rangers would go to .8 FTE. The reason they aren't
46 being cut to .5 FTE is there are certain times of the year when he needs the rangers out
47 there full time.

48
49 Brenner asked the cost savings if they reduced the three park rangers to .5 FTE
50 instead of .7 FTE and .8 FTE. McFarland stated that the savings as proposed is a .8 FTE
51 collectively, which is a savings of \$45,000. By reducing those positions even more, they
52 won't have sufficient coverage for all their park areas during the busy season.

1 Brenner asked what would happen if they change the status of those parks to the
2 level proposed for the re-conveyed property at Lake Whatcom, which isn't even planned to
3 have a Parks Department staff. Regarding the reconveyance lands at Lake Whatcom, Mr.
4 McFarland told her that there would be minimal staff and maintenance. She asked what
5 would happen if they change the status of the other park lands to that same minimal status,
6 with minimal maintenance and staff. McFarland stated that's what they do during the
7 winter seasons. If they want to do that all year long, they will get into labor situations and
8 have to close down shelters. They would only staff for peak periods.

9
10 Brenner asked what kind of labor problems they would have. McFarland stated that
11 according to the labor agreement, they can only drop below a certain number of positions
12 and still use seasonal extra help, which is essential.

13
14 Brenner asked if they don't have the option to have half-time staff. McFarland stated
15 it would have to be bargained.

16
17 Brenner asked the savings if they close all park programs except senior services,
18 such as Silver Lake Park. McFarland stated they would essentially close the park. There
19 would be public use. No one would clean restrooms or maintain basic facilities.

20
21 Brenner asked what would happen if they closed all those buildings until further
22 notice, but allow people to still go into the park. She doesn't want to see the parks close.
23 She wants to see the services drop way down. McFarland stated they still have to maintain
24 a basic level of service, including having restrooms or sani-cans. Someone must mow and
25 maintain the grass. They must still maintain the buildings, even if they're closed.

26
27 Brenner asked what would happen if they don't mow the grass. She asked if they
28 have to put bathrooms at the re-conveyed park. McFarland stated the grass would grow if
29 they don't mow it. Bathrooms near the re-conveyed park are proposed for existing, nearby
30 areas that will service the trailheads.

31
32 Brenner stated she would like to know those costs and what happens if they don't
33 provide those services at the other parks. She asked if the choice is to close parks or
34 supply all these services. She doesn't mean to close the parks down, just cut the level of
35 service. She asked if there would be a problem to do that. McFarland stated the real
36 expenses are at parks like Hovander or one of the larger parks that have staff. There would
37 be quite a public outcry if they reduced those services. Also, they must protect the assets
38 they have out there. Buildings would be vandalized. Someone would have to be out there
39 to provide oversight. The facilities would degrade. They aren't doing any park
40 programming out there.

41
42 Brenner asked if the only park programs are at Roeder Home and the senior centers.
43 McFarland stated they also do a minimal amount of programming with some interpretive
44 programming.

45
46 Caskey-Schreiber stated there are some programs like the rifle range and Youth and
47 Families Program. They didn't budget for those in 2007 and 2008, so they've already cut
48 those programs. McFarland stated the rifle range is operated as an enterprise fund. The
49 fees from programs cover all the costs. There is one staff left in the Youth and Family
50 Program, which is the old Outdoor Program. That person is the backup position for newer
51 park areas like Point Whitehorn and to cover rangers who are unavailable for some reason.
52 That staff person also deals with signs, permitting, regulatory, and environmental permits.
53

1 Brenner stated there is a significant cut to the outdoor recreation program and the
2 department has lost quite a few FTE's. McFarland stated they won't be doing the kayaking
3 program.
4

5 Caskey-Schreiber stated Mr. McFarland has done a great job. She's only heard from
6 the community about the Roeder Home. She asked what will go away exactly in the cultural
7 arts program. She asked how much activity was at this home. McFarland described the
8 Roeder Home programs. The only programs that would be affected at the Roeder Home will
9 be those that occur on the second floor. Most activities take place on the first floor or
10 basement studios. Moving the Parks Department administration to the second floor of the
11 Roeder Home allows them to keep the building open and still allow all those activities to
12 occur. The space will be available for anyone who wants to rent it and host their own
13 classes.
14

15 Caskey-Schreiber asked about the possibility of moving either the Christmas Arts
16 and Crafts Show or the Parks Department administration to Hovander Park instead.
17 McFarland stated they could build an office facility at Hovander Park, but it floods there. It
18 is not the best option. There are many Christmas sales in the community. It is an event
19 that costs the County money. It doesn't make money.
20

21 Fleetwood asked if the Parks Department administrative offices will be on the second
22 and third floors of the Roeder Home, and the first floor and basement are still available to
23 the public for rent. McFarland stated that is correct. There is still an opportunity to provide
24 space for the classes that are there now. Also, the upstairs is not accessible according to
25 the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Everything can continue, but the
26 County won't be paying for instructors, supplies, materials, and advertising for those arts
27 classes. The impact is to the approximately 500 to 600 people who sign up for classes
28 every year, plus the attendance to the Christmas Arts and Crafts Show.
29

30 Brenner stated most or all of the people who sent emails to the Council specifically
31 said the County shouldn't close the Roeder Home. She doesn't know how that started. She
32 asked if people could still get married at the Roeder Home. McFarland stated they could.
33

34 Weimer asked if the County is forbidden from shutting down the arts and crafts
35 program. McFarland stated there is nothing that talks about arts and crafts or cultural arts
36 in the gift deed, which is for park purposes. He has a legal opinion to that effect from
37 County staff. The property must be used for public park purposes. The home is still being
38 used for virtually everything, with the exception of those classes. If the County doesn't
39 keep the home open, it reverts back. This is a way of keeping the home open, allowing the
40 public to continue to use the home, and being more efficient. The change will expand the
41 time the home is open for drop-ins. Any changes to the home would be minimal. They
42 would upgrade wiring for data and phone connections and install closets and locks to secure
43 office areas.
44

45 Weimer asked if there is another house on the same property that can be used for
46 office space just as easily, so they won't have to change the use of the Roeder Home.
47 Weimer stated they've looked at that in the past. This is an area that will have to go before
48 the City of Bellingham for permitting. Because of accessibility issues, that home could also
49 be used for more classes or space. Right now, they rent that home, and it's a source of
50 revenue for the County.
51

52 Nelson asked if there are any fees, permits, or applications that Parks Department
53 staff did on the highway, or if it was strictly administrative. He asked if the public accessed

1 the offices on the Mt. Baker Highway. McFarland stated it was strictly administrative and
2 maintenance, but there was public access. People sometimes complained about driving out
3 to the office to make a reservation in person or pick up information.
4

5 Nelson asked if parking would be an issue at the Roeder Home. McFarland stated it
6 shouldn't be.
7

8 Fleetwood asked if there will be any problems with separating maintenance and
9 administration. McFarland stated there is a little bit, but many departments and agencies
10 deal with that separation. They won't be very far up the road at Hovander Park. If it
11 becomes a problem, they could always assign staff from the Roeder Home to the
12 maintenance facility, but they function as a separate unit and it won't be necessary.
13 Maintenance doesn't have any drop-in or walk-in traffic. There are benefits to having the
14 maintenance crew at the most major park, given the number of structures and things going
15 on there.
16

17 Brenner asked about the kayak program. She asked if there is a labor issue if they
18 reduce the need for the maintenance. McFarland stated it was previously a contracted
19 service. It costs the County more to maintain those kayaks than the County got in return.
20 They are just cutting the program.
21

22 Brenner stated Mr. McFarland said there would be a labor issue if they cut people to
23 half-time. McFarland stated those rangers are needed during peak periods. They are also
24 cutting the lifeguard program at Samish Park. During the summer months, multiple
25 facilities all have to be opened and closed at different times. There are campgrounds and
26 rentals in the parks. Also, that's when they do the most maintenance and cleaning, so they
27 need lots of bodies.
28

29 Brenner stated she is concerned. There will be an increase in homeless people and
30 hungry people. The County is responsible for life and death issues. Parks are a wonderful
31 amenity, but they must do more than make cuts. Some things aren't life and death issues.
32

33 Crawford stated that to balance this budget, the administration proposes cutting the
34 conservation futures fund. He's not sure councilmembers will allow that, which means they
35 won't balance the budget. The Council will have to balance the budget somehow to be
36 responsible. He asked hypothetically how Mr. McFarland would make more cuts if he had
37 to. He asked if it would mean park closures. McFarland stated they would have to close
38 parks, because they would have to cut staff. He is already absorbing increased costs. They
39 are left with positions. The proposed budget as it is requires changes in the organization
40 and staff. If more cuts were ordered, he'd have to look and see who is next on the list and
41 how they would deal with it. The approach he's taken has been to impact the public the
42 least. Doing less in the off-season is a short-term solution for a couple of years, to get
43 through. Impacts will begin to be felt in 2010. He would try to keep ahead of those
44 impacts as much as possible. The next step would be to close facilities. The challenge is
45 that the biggest facilities have the greatest cost because they are fully developed and much
46 used. Closing a small, undeveloped park facility wouldn't affect costs so much. They could
47 close all of them, and the cost savings would be a fraction of what it costs to run Hovander
48 Park.
49

50 Brenner asked how they would prevent vandalism if they close a park. McFarland
51 stated cleaning buildings and shelters are the most labor intensive, so they would be closed.
52 In some instances, the grounds would remain open.
53

1 Brenner asked how they would keep people out of a park. McFarland stated they
2 would close shelters and restrooms.

3
4 Brenner stated that doesn't mean they are necessarily closing the park. They can
5 change the designation of the parks to minimal use.

6
7 Caskey-Schreiber stated she is looking for more things to cut so they don't have to
8 cut the conservation futures fund. There are other areas to cut. They just need more
9 details. Each department has a budget category called Other Services. The
10 councilmembers know nothing about that category. She asked for the detailed information
11 about what is funded in each department's Other Services category. The Parks Department
12 is taking a significant hit. It has lost four staff, is changing locations, and shutting down a
13 building. Mr. McFarland has been really aggressive. She won't look at that department to
14 balance the budget further, but she will strive to make a balanced budget.

15
16 *(Clerk's Note: End of tape two, side A.)*

17
18 Caskey-Schreiber continued to state 132,000 people use Hovander Park. In a sense,
19 it's wrong to take away what the majority of citizens in the county use.

20
21 Sheriff and Jail

22
23 Bill Elfo, Sheriff, described the neighborhood deputy program, increased gang
24 activity, 2011 Olympic security preparations, testing systems and simulations, jail work
25 center, lifted booking restrictions, staffing plan, and his budget adjustments.

26
27 The drug task force has been very successful. The unit's clerical staff has not been
28 approved. Losing this clerical staff will reduce efficiency. Also, the grant requires a part-
29 time clerical staff person.

30
31 He is also concerned with deputy housing in Point Roberts. Those trailers have fallen
32 to disrepair and have been vacant for three years. Instead, they've rented houses as an
33 interim measure. He has recommended that the County build homes on the properties
34 where the trailers are located. They weren't able to renew leases, and the plan is to move
35 deputies back into those trailers. He doesn't recommend it because of the poor condition of
36 the trailers.

37
38 Benner stated she would like to ask the Point Roberts community to help provide
39 housing for the deputies, or they won't have full-time deputy service.

40
41 Caskey-Schreiber asked if there are other options, such as putting a mobile home on
42 County-owned park land. Elfo stated they could. He would recommend getting a
43 manufactured home that doesn't require a lot of maintenance. It's difficult to get
44 contractors up there to do any work. It would be an all-day job for County facilities staff to
45 go up there.

46
47 There are Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requirements of the radio
48 system due by 2013. All the jurisdictions in the region agreed to meet those requirements
49 in 2009. If that's not funded, they will delay not only the County, but others. He read the
50 ASR's that were not approved for funding.

51
52 Things are going well in the jail. They are still short on space all the time. They are
53 making maximum use of jail alternatives. They are also reducing the number of days the

1 average person spends in jail by making work opportunities available. Bookings since 2006
2 have gone up about 45 percent because of the space available in the interim jail and
3 because they lifted booking restrictions. He described the ASR's that were not approved for
4 funding, including prescription medication costs and increased hours for visiting nurses.

5
6 Wendy Jones, Sheriff's Office, stated Dr. Chris Knowles is the contracting physician.
7 The jail contracts with Whatcom Psychiatric Clinic.

8
9 Nelson asked if the doctor is using the State Medicaid formulary. Jones stated Dr.
10 Knowles uses a jail formulary, which is related. Standards in the community for mental
11 health drugs have shifted to a poly-drug response. Rather than using one medication, they
12 use multiple medications. That seems to be the driver behind the increase.

13
14 Nelson asked if they can use the State Medicaid formulary. Jones stated she would
15 look into it.

16
17 Elfo continued to discuss the unfunded ASR's for the jail, such as having a good
18 medical program.

19
20 Brenner asked if they routinely station single officers without families in Point
21 Roberts. Elfo stated the process for selection is governed by the bargaining agreement. He
22 explained the process.

23
24 Brenner asked if there is a legal problem with informing the residents of Point
25 Roberts that the only way the County can extend the resident deputy program would be to
26 have the community provide housing. Desler stated there may not be a legal problem.
27 There may be other options to consider, such as going through a normal request for
28 proposal (RFP) process.

29
30 Brenner stated she's talking about someone volunteering a residence that meets
31 standards.

32
33 Crawford asked if cuts beyond what were proposed would be to the neighborhood
34 deputy program. Elfo stated his first responsibility is to have emergency response deputies
35 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Any deputy positions cut would be the
36 neighborhood deputies, who they've come to rely on for responses outside their areas.

37
38 Crawford asked if the savings per year from cutting one of the neighborhood
39 deputies would be about \$100,000 per year. Elfo stated the savings would be something
40 like that.

41
42 Nelson asked for more detailed information on the types of calls that come in and on
43 the healthcare costs in the jail. Look at jail criteria for providing medical services. He
44 understands costs are going up. There may be opportunity to work with mental health
45 funding and use a formula that recognizes the unique situations with mental health and
46 substance abuse. Jones stated she looked at the increases. If she had received all the
47 ASR's she requested for medical care from 2007 to 2010, with the exception of electronic
48 medical records, her costs would have increased at 20.26 percent. That is more than she'd
49 like, but it's also much better than the increasing medical costs the County is paying for
50 County staff, which is increasing more than 50 percent. The percent increase for healthcare
51 provided at the jail is less than most places nationwide and significantly less than Whatcom
52 County's employee medical care. The number of offenders they are dealing with has gone
53 through the roof. The cost per inmate for basic health care is about \$203 per year. With

1 the ASR's approved as requested, that cost would have been about \$193 per inmate, per
2 year. It is still a significant increase overall. She's working with the pharmacist and doctor,
3 and they've reduced the number of inmates who are on medication from 18 percent to 13
4 percent. Today, she has 58 people sitting in jail who have serious forms of mental illness
5 that has been untreated in the community.
6

7 Nelson asked the percentage of those who had Medicaid. Jones stated that almost
8 none of them had Medicaid. That's part of the problem. People are working to get those
9 inmates enrolled and on stable treatment. She's working with Health Department staff to
10 tweak that system.
11

12 Nelson stated Ms. Jones can also work with the Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare
13 Access (WAHA). Elfo stated it's important that there be a system for those inmates to get
14 medication when they're out of jail.
15

16 Jones stated that it's difficult to get people accepted into community treatment
17 programs, even if they are Medicaid-eligible.
18

19 Nelson stated that's where WAHA comes in.
20

21 Jones stated there may be alternatives to medications. The most immediate need is
22 a small increase in nursing hours. If she had to pick one right now, she would pick the
23 nurses.
24

25 Caskey-Schreiber referenced the jail fund. It isn't enough for a new jail. She asked
26 if they can pay for the medications and visiting nurse needs from that fund. Jones stated
27 the funding for the jail out of the general fund was frozen at 2006 levels. Any ASR's or
28 basic budget increases come out of the jail fund at the expense of saving for the new jail.
29 This or any ASR, if approved, will come from the jail sales tax increase. The trade-off is not
30 putting the money away to save for the new jail.
31

32 Crawford asked if the County can take advantage of low-cost commercial
33 medications, such as Wal-Mart's \$4 prescriptions. Jones stated it is a contracted service, so
34 they had to put it out to bid. A requirement is that the medications are delivered to the jail.
35 They take medications that are all unit dosed in blister packs so excess medications can be
36 returned for credits.
37

38 Crawford stated staff goes between the Irongate facility and downtown, and Wal-
39 Mart is on the way. He asked if someone could go pick up those prescriptions each day.
40 Jones stated many of the medications they're talking about are not \$4 medications. The
41 medications with costs that really impact the jail are the psych medications, expensive
42 antibiotics that treat drug resistance, and expensive HIV drug cocktails. She is taking about
43 \$2,000 out of her current budget to join a State study on the ability to bulk buy prescription
44 medications for jails and prisons in Washington State. That would reduce the dependence
45 upon local pharmacies and allow them to bulk buy medications they know they routinely
46 give out to many offenders. They are doing the actuarial study for that now.
47

48 Elfo stated some of the larger jails that are doing that have a pharmacist on staff.
49

50 Jones stated Whatcom County is not large enough to do that at this point. She
51 needs to be able to get medications to the jail at least seven days per week, if not 24 hours
52 per day.
53

1 Nelson stated the \$4 medications are generally low-cost medications for chronic
2 conditions. They won't realize much of a savings from that. The HIV cocktails and anti-
3 psychotics are very expensive. There are some generics coming out that will begin to save
4 the County costs.
5

6 Elfo stated the Executive recommended expanding electronic home monitoring and
7 home detention. That will generate more revenue. In addition, with advanced global
8 positioning system (GPS) technology, they can bump up the risk factors and get more of
9 these people in home detention. If they're not in County custody, the County doesn't have
10 to provide medications.
11

12 Weimer asked the \$1 million increase in the jail's other services and charges. Jones
13 stated it was a reorganization that moved rental costs, insurance costs, and tort costs.
14

15 Weimer stated they have over \$6 million per year in other services and charges. He
16 always looks at those things first to make cuts, rather than cut deputies. He asked if there
17 is any way to cut enough for Point Roberts housing out of that \$6 million. Elfo stated
18 *(inaudible)*.
19

20 He is concerned that if he has to come back to the Council with a supplemental
21 budget request for more medications or nurses, that cost won't be calculated into the per
22 diem charge to municipalities, the State, and the federal government. They won't recapture
23 those costs.
24

25 Jones stated that the costs must be included in the base budget, or it won't get
26 included in the per diem calculation. Any supplemental budget requests will be 100 percent
27 from the jail sales tax fund, and can't be reimbursed. If those costs are approved in the
28 2009-2010 Budget approved in November, those costs are calculated in the per diem costs.
29

30 Also keep in mind that the County absorbed the offenders previously housed at the
31 work release facility and no longer has that cost. It was a minimal increase in the operating
32 cost of the work center. That is fewer expenditures. They didn't lose the revenue from the
33 program. They figured out a way to continue with work release. That is a healthy
34 expenditure that no longer exists for Whatcom County. Consider that when considering the
35 jail cuts that have been made.
36

37 *(Clerk's Note: End of tape two, side B.)*
38

39 Auditor
40

41 Shirley Forslof, Auditor, described her funding adjustments and approved and
42 unapproved ASR's. Other activities include more audits. They have met their goals for
43 production. They have new goals. They are going to have an outside review of internal
44 auditing. The Licensing Division and Recording Division have met their turnaround goals.
45 They are looking into how many voter registrations can be entered in a certain amount of
46 time and other types of production standards. She is asking for more accountability and
47 productivity from staff. She's received many comments from the public who were pleased
48 about the way staff helped them. They are in the middle of a very busy general election.
49 Ballot collectors will stand on Lottie Street on Monday and Tuesday to collect ballots from
50 drivers.
51

52 Nelson asked how much the County receives from license plates. Forslof stated the
53 County gets \$3 for each renewal. The State reimburses the County for the postage to mail

1 that license plate. The Licensing Division makes money for the County. It costs less to
2 provide the service than they bring in.

3
4 Brenner thanked Ms. Forslof for her years of service. She also thanked Debbie
5 Adelstein, who is incredibly helpful. She asked whose idea it was to change the license
6 plates every seven years. Forslof stated the reason is because of a reflective quality on the
7 plates. The State Patrol went to the legislature and said that the reflective quality of the
8 license plate wears off, and the State Patrol wants to be able to read the plates. The
9 legislature passed the law to replace plates every seven years.

10
11 Brenner stated she doesn't believe that happens. It's a huge imposition and cost
12 upon people. She asked when that law was passed. Forslof stated the law was passed
13 approximately five years ago.

14
15 Miscellaneous Non-Departmental

16
17 Gordon Rogers, Council of Governments, thanked the Council for its support over the
18 years. The County's dues pays for the general budget for the Council of Governments. It is
19 also a match for federal and State funds they receive to complete federal and State
20 transportation planning requirements.

21
22 Crawford asked if line items 4036 and 4450 on page 92 of Volume 2 have to do with
23 Council of Governments (COG) funding. Desler stated line item 4036 isn't related to COG.

24
25 Rogers stated line item 4036 is the position held by Tom Parker, who has been
26 supported through the years. The Executive is pulling it from the budget.

27
28 Desler stated the reduction in line item 4450 is the Smart Trips program. There is
29 also a reduction for the COG legislative specialist. The County dues to COG is being
30 paid.

31
32 Crawford asked the effect of cutting funding to the legislative specialist. Rogers
33 stated he doesn't yet know what the result will be. They're still working it out. Other
34 jurisdictions continue to support the position.

35
36 Crawford asked if Mr. Parker has clients other than COG. Rogers stated he does.

37
38 Nelson asked the purpose for line item 4022, a non-departmental 2010 expense for
39 water resources in the amount of \$24,500. Desler stated that item is to contribute to the
40 Bertrand Creek water monitoring program. The local group in that area will pay half the
41 cost. That line item in Volume 2, page 92, should be deleted. Those costs for Bertrand
42 Creek shown on line item 4022 on page 94 of Volume 2. It will adjust the bottom line by
43 that amount, because it's been double counted.

44
45 Nelson asked about line item 4090 regarding association dues, which is increasing.
46 Desler stated that line item covers the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC),
47 the Washington Association of County Officials (WaCO), and the National Association of
48 Counties (NaCO).

49
50 Nelson asked about line item 4460 on page 93 of Volume 2. Desler stated they
51 started a program in 2008 to urge all employees in the civic center area to take the bus to
52 and from work. It is the employee bus pass program.

1 Crawford asked about line item 2945 on page 92 and line item 137 on page 93, both
2 in Volume 2 and regarding the Law Enforcement Office and Fire Fighter (LEOFF) I expenses.
3

4 Caskey-Schreiber asked what happens to the interest generated from the \$3.5
5 million budgeted last year for the LEOFF I fund. She asked if that interest goes back into
6 the fund, and if that's why they don't have to contribute more to that fund.
7

8 Desler stated that's correct. The \$100,000 is the general fund contribution. The
9 \$200,000 is the estimated expense from that fund.
10

11 Crawford asked about the law and justice strategic plan. He asked if the County will
12 no longer provide financial support to the Law and Justice Council. He asked if the Law and
13 Justice Council has been notified. Desler stated the Executive sent the Council a letter a few
14 weeks ago.
15

16 Crawford asked about line item 4024 on page 92 of Volume 2. He asked if the total
17 cost is \$360,000 or \$460,000. Desler stated the total cost is \$2.5 million.
18

19 Brad Bennett, Administrative Services Department, stated the costs for 2009 are for
20 planning and a project manager. They are internal costs to get the project team set up to
21 install the software, not the software acquisition. They have to convert the data from the
22 existing system to the new system. There is \$229,000 for salaries and wages for staff. Key
23 staff from the Treasurer's Office and Assessor's Office will work on installing the software.
24 They will backfill their responsibilities within the department.
25

26 Desler stated once the system is set up, they anticipate reducing the number of staff
27 in the Assessor's Office, and possibly in the Treasurer's Office. That is yet to be negotiated.
28 Once the conversion is done, there will be fewer staff in the operation to support those
29 existing offices. They will also go to an annual revaluation schedule, rather than a four-year
30 revaluation schedule.
31

32 Caskey-Schreiber asked for a print-out of how this money is budgeted.
33

34 Crawford stated the hard cost is \$2.5 million. There are soft costs of \$460,000 for
35 mostly payroll. Desler stated that's correct. He asked if cutting that \$460,000 would be
36 impractical and prevent them from implementing the system. Desler stated they don't want
37 this project to fail. It's a big deal. They've spent months negotiating to pull together a
38 collective plan with the Treasurer and Assessor. These are real costs. Other counties are
39 spending much more money on virtually the same system. Whatcom County will not be
40 cutting edge to implement this system. About four other counties are implementing this
41 system. The administration intends to build from their experience and purchase from their
42 bids to purchase the software. This is about as cheap as they can do this.
43

44 Crawford asked about line item 4036 on page 92 of Volume 2. He asked what that
45 item is for. Desler stated it is other federal and State representation to support various
46 issues such as the 2010 Olympics, emergency management, and the Sheriff's
47 communication system.
48

49 Crawford asked how much the County got from that lobbying effort. Desler stated
50 the County received a multi-million dollar earmark. He's still waiting on information about
51 the details of that earmark. It's in the federal budget. The County received other funds
52 regarding the rapid border prosecution initiative and the data integration project.
53

1 Crawford asked about line item 4038 on page 92 of Volume 2. He asked why that
2 budget amount is less. Desler stated they anticipate the cost of acquiring that power will be
3 less, based on volume purchase and reduced rates. They are still purchasing 100 percent of
4 green power. The County is using less electricity, and the provider is giving the County a
5 slightly better rate.
6

7 Crawford asked about the reduced budget for domestic violence, line item 4050 on
8 page 92 of Volume 2. Desler stated the full \$65,000 funded previously included \$50,000 for
9 the Commission Against Domestic Violence and \$15,000 for the Womencare Shelter. The
10 administration now recommends that Womencare Shelter participate in the 2060 grant
11 program for low-income housing.
12

13 Nelson asked what is included in line item 4060 on page 92 of Volume 2. Desler
14 stated it is a senior nutrition program that has been consolidated in another account, line
15 item 4240. The program isn't being reduced.
16

17 Nelson asked the reason for eliminating the cost of State audits. Desler stated that
18 cost is now in the Finance budget.
19

20 Nelson asked what is in line item 4075 on page 92 of Volume 2 regarding leave
21 payout. Desler stated it is mostly sick leave payout for employees who leave the
22 organization. The departments pay the vacation cash out.
23

24 Brenner asked what is included in line item 4900 on page 93 of Volume 2. The costs
25 have varied dramatically. Desler stated the \$1.7 million in 2008 had to do with union
26 payout settlements. All the settlements are done.
27

28 Brenner stated that in the years before the settlements, that line item was only
29 around \$200,000. She asked why that line item is over \$500,000 for 2009 and 2010.
30 Desler stated the Council adjusts wages and benefits during the course of the year. Other
31 union settlements occur. That's where the money comes from.
32

33 Brenner stated Mr. Desler told her those amounts were minimal. This is not minimal.
34 Desler stated that of the \$500,000, \$278,000 is the administrative cost allocation.
35

36 Bennett stated the administrative cost allocation is based on formulas that are based
37 on the number of expenditures. It allocates everything from the State audit to the check
38 stock. The \$278,000 is the allocation attributable to all the non-departmental expenditures
39 and all the services they provide to the special purpose districts.
40

41 *(Clerk's Note: End of tape three, side A.)*
42

43 Bennett continued to state that this year, contracts were settled in July, so they had
44 to calculate everyone's salaries based on the best information they had from the contract
45 settlements. None of the salary matrices were done. None of the reclassifications were
46 done. They recalculated it as close as they can. The amounts included are to cover any
47 little calculation mistakes.
48

49 Brenner stated there would be money left to fund the Sean Humphrey House if they
50 want to.
51

52 Desler stated the administration proposes that the Sean Humphrey House apply for
53 funding from the 2060 grant funding for low-income housing. This service is a natural for

1 that grant program. The administration has been helping the Sean Humphrey House
2 prepare the application.
3

4 Crawford stated the 2060 grant funds come from the additional \$10 fee every time a
5 document is recorded at the Auditor's Office. A multi-agency committee decides where to
6 spend those grant funds. The reality is that the Auditor's total number of recorded
7 documents will go down because there are fewer real estate transactions. The amount
8 available for those grants will go down. The competition for that money will be intense. He
9 cautions everyone about counting on those funds. The County should be careful about
10 saying people can just go apply for those funds.

11
12 *(Clerk's Note: The Committee took a dinner break from 4:03 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.)*
13

14 Advisory Boards, Commissions, and Committees

15
16 Geoff Menzies, Drayton Harbor Shellfish Advisory Committee Chair, submitted
17 information (*on file*). The staff allocated to the two shellfish advisory committees are the
18 same for 2009 and 2010 as it was in 2008. He read his handout.
19

20 Weimer asked when the total maximum daily load (TMDL) study from the State
21 Department of Ecology is supposed to be done. Menzies stated data collection ends in
22 December. When that's done, the County must work closely with Ecology to identify priority
23 sites or continue a reduced water quality program that will track problem locations and
24 success. A lot of the budget money will go to water quality monitoring.
25

26 Chuck Antholt, Agricultural Advisory Committee Acting Chair, submitted and read
27 from a handout (*on file*). Don't suspend the Conservation Futures fund.
28

29 Weimer stated there is \$3 million in the conservation futures fund that they aren't
30 spending, so the administration thinks it won't hurt anything to suspend the program for a
31 year. He asked how much of the agricultural lands they can purchase with this \$3 million
32 through the purchase of development rights (PDR) program. Antholt stated he would look
33 into it and find out.
34

35 Brenner stated the Council had a good rapport with the farming community from the
36 start of the program. Antholt stated farmers hesitated early on to deal with the County.
37 Now, people are lining up at the door for this program.
38

39 Caskey-Schreiber stated she's asked the administration to come up with an option
40 for the budget other than ending the conservation futures fund. She agrees with Mr.
41 Antholt. Whatcom County is very fortunate to have farmers who are willing to participate in
42 the program. Do whatever it takes to preserve the program.
43

44 Cindy Bauleke, Commission Against Domestic Violence Chair, thanked the Council for
45 its support. She described the Commission membership, purpose, and projects. The
46 Commission brings grant money to Whatcom County. Their budget is minimal and funding
47 comes from different cities and the County. They asked for a slight increase, for a total of
48 \$54,400 because the current director is full-time. The last director was part-time. The City
49 approved the slight increase. Reconsider the budget. If the County isn't able to provide
50 \$54,400, then at least maintain their existing budget amount of \$50,000.
51

52 Nelson stated the amount budgeted is decreased for 2009 and 2010. The 2008
53 budget for 2008 was \$50,000. The proposed budget for 2009 is \$45,000.

1
2 Kathleen Pate, Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board Co-Chair, submitted and
3 read from a handout (*on file*).
4

5 Brenner asked if there is some way the Council can do the things Ms. Pate
6 recommends. They are all administrative functions. Establish a process to retain millage
7 funds that haven't been committed, rather than putting them back into the general fund.
8 They should be able to locate that money. Set up the system so unspent money from
9 developmental disabilities millage can be tracked. Desler stated the administration can do
10 that. The administration is working with Councilmember Weimer, Ms. Pate, and other
11 Developmental Disability Advisory Board members.
12

13 Kelly asked how the indirect rate is set. Desler stated it is set by Office of
14 Management and Budget (OMB) circulars. They do that consistently across the
15 organization.
16

17 Susan Jewell, Developmental Disability Advisory Board Planning Committee and ARC
18 of Whatcom County, submitted information (*on file*) and stated she agrees with Ms. Pate.
19 Mr. Desler said in a meeting that they have to pay back the administration dollars. The
20 indirect administration costs are excessive. They don't know why that cost is so high. For
21 instance, the 2007 costs for indirect administration fees were over \$500,000. The entire
22 administration costs for all of the human services department is only \$396,000. She asked
23 why the little developmental disabilities program have half a million assessed against it.
24

25 Ninety-seven percent of this money for this program comes from a State fund. That
26 contract says administration must be held to seven percent. Seven percent is too low to
27 administer a program, but 27 percent is much too high. The Washington Administrative
28 Code (WAC) was written so money would go to services, and only seven percent would be
29 for administration. The County takes these millage dollars to meet these federally-
30 calculated rates. This program doesn't get federal money. A standard for some other grant
31 program is being applied to this program. She understands the administration wants
32 across-the-board administration rates. However, that means that no millage dollars will be
33 available if they have to pay those excessive rates. Help this program be administered
34 more effectively.
35

36 (*Clerk's Note: End of tape three, side B.*)
37

38 Jewell stated the program was assessed \$503,579, at 26.69 percent for indirect cost
39 allocations.
40

41 Brenner asked if indirect cost allocation is the same thing as administration. Jewell
42 stated that's the way it was explained to her at a meeting yesterday.
43

44 Nelson asked why it is \$503,000 on a budget that says there are contracts of \$1.6
45 million.
46

47 Desler stated the County uses the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circular
48 to capture costs and rates and apply them equally across the county departments so they
49 can be applied to federal grants and other sources of funds. He explained how that process
50 works.
51

52 Brenner asked why the County's Finance Division doesn't do that process. Bennett
53 stated it requires a very specific technical knowledge that the County staff don't have.

1
2 Kelly stated the rate is based on the entire budget. An independent auditor looks at
3 the entire budget for the past two years. They come up with an indirect cost rate, based on
4 the amount that was spent on administrative costs over the last two years throughout the
5 entire budget. That indirect cost rate is based on all the big programs and the amount of
6 money used to pay for those big programs. When the big rate is applied to a small
7 program, it amounts to big dollars. That is a problem. If they break out the Developmental
8 Disabilities budget, the rate isn't necessarily applied to salaries. It will get applied to capital
9 projects, for example. If they are going to secure grant funding, they want to make sure
10 agreement for funding allows them to apply funds to indirect rates. It really hurts the small
11 programs. It's not fair, but that's the way it works.
12

13 Jewell stated the program doesn't receive any of that federal money.
14

15 Kelly stated the main County budget does include federal money, which is what
16 drives the indirect cost rate.
17

18 Jewell stated that's why there will never be any millage dollars. When Mr. Desler
19 indicates that the County provided an \$800,000 subsidy the last eight years, the purpose is
20 to cover things like a half million dollars in administrative costs.
21

22 Brenner asked if they can change the way they do the allocation for small programs,
23 so they don't hurt the smaller programs. Desler stated the indirect administrative costs
24 don't go away. If one program is immune from those expenses, someone else has to pay
25 for those costs. They are using federal standards for how they account for these
26 administrative costs, and they are audited by the State Auditor. If the County does
27 something inappropriate compared to those standards, the State Auditor will point it out to
28 the County. If they do it correctly, they will be able to capture those costs from federal
29 grants and apply them to federal grants.
30

31 Brenner stated it's more important to charge different programs no more than ten
32 percent for administration. She asked if they can do that.
33

34 Nelson stated there were adjustments. The amount was 9.78 percent in 2008. They
35 were at 14.5 percent in 2005. They are taking off roughly five percent, which brings it to
36 21. He asked the administrative cost for 2010. Desler stated they should have a discussion
37 about all these numbers with Terry Hinz.
38

39 Bennett stated there are two reasons the rate went down so much. The rate is
40 specific to this program area. The rates are custom to the Human Services Division of the
41 Health Department. The first reason the rate went down is because they over-collected in a
42 previous period. The second reason the rate is lower is because they stopped including
43 administrative staff in the Health Department that does accounting, and is charging those
44 costs directly rather than indirectly. The rate goes up and down over time. It's directly
45 related to the OMB circular requirements.
46

47 Brenner asked if they can legally do it a different way.
48

49 Nelson asked the result of not following OMB regulations. Bennett stated the costs
50 will be there regardless. They will be allocated elsewhere.
51

52 Weimer stated King County has an ordinance that by May of every year, the
53 Executive shall submit the methodology for cost allocation to the Council for review and

1 approval. He asked how departments who don't have the money for cost allocation get
2 dealt with. They don't have grants, and can't pay the allocation. He asked if the costs are
3 absorbed by programs like Developmental Disabilities that have more grant money.
4 Bennett stated the starting point of the budget is the base budget. They have an
5 administrative cost allocation, based on the current year's budget. The consultant uses the
6 County methodology, makes adjustments for actual costs two years ago, and adjusts to the
7 appropriate building costs.
8

9 Brenner asked if they can legally allocate according to the budget of each program.
10 That seems the fairest way to do it. Desler stated they can legally change some things.
11

12 Bennett stated they can't allocate based on a budget amount consistently throughout
13 the organization.
14

15 Nelson asked that Terry Hinz provide an explanation in writing on how this occurred.
16

17 Kelly asked if the administration can apply an indirect administration cost rate of
18 eight percent to this program. That would free up a lot more of the budget to go towards
19 direct costs and make the program function. Desler stated the County can apply any rate it
20 decides, but they will have to reconcile that decision with the federal government.
21

22 Kelly asked that the administration bring that back to the Council as an option.
23

24 Chris Phillips, Public Health Advisory Board Chair, stated the proposed budget shows
25 a cut of approximately \$1 million, one-third of the general fund contribution to the Health
26 Department. Staff have done a remarkably good job of presenting a difficult, but
27 considered, budget that combines reduced expenses with revenue enhancements.
28

29 Public health is mission-driven. As such, they hesitate cutting whole programs. The
30 department has been able to not cut entire programs this year, but the Council should not
31 take that for granted and punish performance. After this budget, there is no more to cut.
32

33 Herb Barker, Lake Management District 1, submitted and read from a handout (*on*
34 *file*). The district wants to put together a stormwater utility. They need \$110,000 from the
35 County. They are willing to spread that out over a couple of years and contribute a portion
36 of that amount. They are trying to prevent the situation that exists at Lake Whatcom.
37

38 Nelson asked if this has gone through the coordinated water resource integration
39 project (CWRIP) process. Barker stated it has. They were at service level three.
40

41 Brenner stated someone from Skagit County was interested in providing public
42 water. Barker stated a water system was proposed a long time before that. It failed. The
43 Skagit County Public Utility District (PUD) brought water up as far as the Lake Samish area,
44 but didn't have enough water to serve the Lake Samish area. They didn't offer water to the
45 Lake Samish area.
46

47 Brenner stated they can't compare this to Lake Whatcom. Barker stated Lake
48 Samish water serves over 400 households directly from the lake.
49

50 Brenner stated there isn't an economy of scale at Lake Samish. She's not sure
51 \$110,000 will solve these problems. She asked about preventative measures. Barker
52 stated preventative measures are better. They don't want it to get worse.
53

1 Nelson stated that's the reason they're requesting this stormwater plan. Barker
2 stated they plan to do simple things that don't cost a lot, once they get the stormwater plan
3 together.
4

5 Weimer stated some councilmembers are trying to find a way to fund higher levels of
6 service (LOS).
7

8 Brenner asked if they can use the stormwater plan from another area, such as Birch
9 Bay, and adapt it for this area, rather than create a whole new plan. Barker stated that is
10 something he could look at.
11

12 Weimer stated a lot of it could look the same, but they'd have to craft it to Lake
13 Samish.
14

15 Nelson stated Lake Samish is not saltwater. It's freshwater.
16

17 Baker stated they won't continue to be a burden to the County. Once they have the
18 stormwater plan, they can become a stormwater utility. The residents have expressed a
19 willingness to be charged a fee for the water. They will have a program that is self-
20 sufficient.
21

22 Dac Jamison, Substance Abuse Advisory Board Chair, stated he has two concerns.
23 First, he's concerned about the erosion of the new mental health tax funds due to jail,
24 courts, and probation costs. Their results aren't the same as results realized from
25 treatment. Treatment results are better than the revolving door of incarceration.
26

27 A second concern is the erosion of budgeted funds for mental health and substance
28 abuse. Cutting any funds in mental health and substance abuse will hurt. They will spend
29 less money by treating these people and getting them back into society as taxpayers rather
30 than cycling them through the courts and jail.
31

32 Ron Bronsema, Flood Control Zone District Advisory Committee Chair, stated the
33 advisory committee supports the proposed budget for the flood district.
34

35 There are long-term needs. Now, money from the flood fund goes to stormwater.
36 Continue working to separating that. The flood fund amounts are declining. They are
37 working into their \$5 million emergency reserve fund. People have forgotten why that \$5
38 million was originally set aside. The County used to have a river improvement fund. When
39 there was a major flood event, there wasn't enough money in the fund to do the projects on
40 the river. They must do something to get better long-term funding for the flood district.
41 Don't let the emergency flood fund get too low, or else they will have to use the general
42 fund in an emergency.
43

44 Brenner stated the original flood funding was intended to make sure the general
45 public benefits by protecting public roads and public infrastructure. They are starting to use
46 the funding for indirect water issues that don't pertain directly to flooding. That wasn't the
47 initial intent.
48

49 Desler stated they are not doing anything inappropriate to the law under which the
50 Council set up the flood fund and tax the citizens. Ultimately, the Council decides how to
51 focus the funds.
52

1 Brenner stated she will only support stormwater work if they give people the ability
2 to prevent stormwater from going off their property. Don't charge people who successfully
3 prevent stormwater from leaving their property. That hasn't happened so far.

4
5 Weimer stated they recognize they are beginning to tap into the \$5 million reserve.
6 One reason for a different LOS is to make sure there is more money available for flood
7 emergencies and the flood program.
8

9 Brenner stated the primary reason for the flood fee was to have money for floods.
10 The Council needs to be in charge of the priorities, and not have the priorities handed to
11 them. She doesn't agree with the way the priorities were handled.
12

13 Weimer stated the first increase in level of service was for flood funds, not Lake
14 Whatcom and other things.
15

16 *(Clerk's Note: End of tape four, side A.)*
17

18 Bronsema stated 2008 is a meteorological neutral year, which means the likelihood
19 of having a flood this year is heightened. The floods that occurred in 1951, 1975, 1989,
20 and 1990 were all neutral years. They are in a neutral year this year.
21

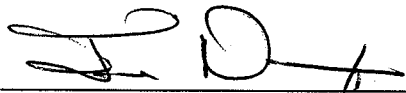
22 Kelly stated Mr. Bronsema's support of a level of service that would help with that
23 issue is important. Bronsema stated level of service four would be great, but may not be
24 realistic.
25

26
27 **OTHER BUSINESS**

28
29 There was no other business.
30

31
32 **ADJOURN**

33
34 The meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.
35

36 
37 _____

38 Jill Nixon, Minutes Transcription
39

40 The Council approved these minutes on November 25, 2008.
41

42 WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
43 WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON
44

45 
46 _____
47 Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk
48



L. Ward Nelson, Acting Committee Chair

