

**BOARD OF MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
BUDGET WORKSHOP MINUTES  
Monday, November 7, 2011  
Commission Chambers  
411 North Fifth Street, Shelton WA 98584**

The 2012 budget workshop commenced at 1:30 p.m. Commissioners Ring Erickson, Sheldon, and Bloomfield were in attendance.

Cmmr. Sheldon opened the workshop by commenting on the Governor's proposed budget reductions. One of revenue reductions proposed is in liquor profits, however Initiative 1183 has a provision that would not allow cuts to counties and cities. He still believes the Governor/legislature will find a way to cut up to \$2 million in revenues to Mason County. The county has labor contract obligations and instead of going ahead with the proposed budget, the Board decided to start over with a reduced number and have requested departments to reduce their 2012 budgets by 8.5%.

Cmmr. Bloomfield stated it is important to remember this is a worst-case scenario, we don't know the exact cuts, and there are many variables but he believes the county has to make a contingency plan now.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson stated that hopefully this is a worst-case scenario. Some things she is hoping to look at are the legislature authorized some of the REET money to operate parks, which would free up some general fund money for other departments. She asked if there is anything in Public Works or DCD/Planning that can be merged with the City. She asked Public Works to look at revenue vs. expenditures, and see if there is room for a levy shift. Another piece that needs to be considered is the .09 Fund. As Commissioners, they have to make decisions that are long-term.

District Court

Patsy Robinson presented information on merging District Court with District Court Probation. It can be merged as one whole department with all the expenditures and revenues together, although probation fees would be identified. Or they could merge the departments together, but make District Court Probation a program under District Court and the expenditures and revenues would be separated.

Judge Meadows pointed out that the statute requires District Court Probation fees must be used for District Court Probation services. Merging the offices would allow District Court to provide clerical support and the current Administrative Assistant position in District Court Probation would be eliminated.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson stated the Board's goal is to make the budget more understandable. She would like it merged together but keep the District Court Probation as a separate program in order to understand the office operations.

Cmmr. Sheldon agreed that making it more transparent is a good thing. He then asked where they would find a 8.5% reduction.

Judge Meadows stated that District Court Probation is fully funded by fees. In District Court that would be two staff positions. She noted that she did submit paperwork for a Court Commissioner position but is not pursuing it at this time, knowing the budget restraints.

The Commissioners said they would approve the request for new recording/archiving equipment for the courtrooms and chambers for 2012.

Judge Meadows requested a safe for District Court. She will work with John Keates to see if REET money could be used.

### Indigent Defense

Judge Sheldon brought up the issue of indigent defense.

Cmmr. Sheldon stated it appears that in most counties, indigent defense reports to the Commissioners, not judicial staff.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson stated she believes the Commissioners are not qualified to supervise indigent defense staff and she is not ok with adding another full time employee (FTE) due to cost. She is ok with continuing with the Charles Lane contract, as it is currently being managed.

Cmmr. Bloomfield agreed that the information indicates indigent defense is under the Commissioners in other counties, but he also is not comfortable with adding another FTE.

A discussion ensued of how the indigent defense would be managed.

Judge Sheldon asked if the Board is comfortable hiring, interviewing, and making sure the attorneys are meeting their responsibilities or does the Board want to designate a person to manage the indigent defense.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson reiterated that she is comfortable with staying with the Charles Lane contract, as it is.

Cmmr. Sheldon stated the county would be spending money on a contract person or hire a person. He believes it could become a risk management issue.

There was discussion of the Charles Lane contract cost and is it for full time or part time. The courts will look into it. Judge Sheldon noted that she is not sure there is a contract for the current work that Mr. Lane is performing.

### Superior Court

Judge Sheldon noted that Superior Court has three courtrooms that will need new recording/archiving equipment. They have spent considerable time looking at budget cuts, and most of their services are mandates with some being unfunded. One area is Drug Court that is not mandated. With the recent 1/10 of 1% tax that was approved, it can be funded. They were able to make suggestions on some operating reductions, but not 8.5%.

### Probation Services

Harris Haertel stated that Probation Services has no supplemental requests. 2012 is a maintenance-of-effort budget and they are exploring two avenues of additional revenues. There is a possibility of a 20% reduction in juvenile court grants from the state. He suggested it may be prudent to wait until the state budget cuts are known.

### Clerk

Pat Swartos, Clerk, stated she submitted a request to add back in a part time employee. She has discovered in her 2011 budget that she calculated staff salaries wrong. She is adjusting operating costs in order to pay the salaries through this year. She presented paperwork for a 2012 supplemental for approximately \$31,000 to correct the staff salaries.

There was discussion of the current status of her 2011 budget.

Ms. Swartos stated they are looking at a new jury program that should reduce expenses in 2012 in Superior & District Courts. When asked how she would find a 8.5% reduction, she stated her operating

Board of Mason County Commissioners' Budget Workshop  
November 7, 2011

budget is about \$60,000 and she has struggled with her budget for the past three years. Her office holds all the records for Superior Court. She noted that about one third of the operations are for criminal matters, most of the activity is civil. Passports are still sold in her office, but they do not take a large amount of money. They do receive revenue for passports.

After further discussion of her 2011 budget, Ms. Swartos said she will send over paperwork showing the status of her budget as of October 2011. She requested her 2012 budget salary lines be adjusted.

Parks, Trails & Facilities

John Keates stated he approached the 2012 budget by looking at facilities and parks as one unit. They will share resources, tools, equipment, supplies and staffing. If they have to meet a 8.5% reduction, he would have to cut equipment, supplies, utilities, and utilize REET funds when appropriate. He has reduced the Belfair lease for the Sheriff's office to the 2011 level. He based his budget on the assumption that REET funds could be used for operating. He is looking at the custodial services.

A group has adopted the Skateboard Park and they have some donation monies to do some of the redecking. That park takes minimal staff time.

Summary

The Board agreed to stay with the October 24 budget changes for the Assessor, Auditor, and Treasurer. The Treasurer has also submitted a staff reclassification.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson asked for a proposal for an ER&R 8.5% reduction.

Patsy Robinson will work on merging the District Court/District Court Probation budgets.

Theresia Ehrich reminded the Board that she needs all budget changes this week to be in the November 21 publication for the December 5 budget hearing.

Adjourn

The workshop adjourned at 2:52 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Diane Zoren, Assistant to County Commissioners

BOARD OF MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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Lynda Ring Erickson  
Chair

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Tim Sheldon  
Commissioner

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Steven Bloomfield  
Commissioner