

BOARD OF MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' PROCEEDINGS

July 26, 2011

1. Call to Order – The Chairperson called the special meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.
2. Present: Commissioner District 1 - Lynda Ring Erickson; Commissioner District 2 – Tim Sheldon; Commissioner District 3 – Jerry Lingle.
3. Public hearing to consider revised precinct boundaries and Commissioner District boundaries.

Karen Herr, Auditor, explained that in March the Board delegated the responsibilities of redistricting to her office. Her office formed a redistricting advisory committee to assist with the project. She thanked the nine members of the committee for their time and effort. The first phase of the project is now complete. At a July 5th Commissioner briefing she presented the Board with the advisory committee's top three recommendations for new county commissioner districts. The committee's decisions were based on State law and the best interest for the citizens. Each new district had to be as equal in population as possible. Existing communities of related and mutual interest were to be preserved. District boundaries had to coincide with existing natural boundaries and they had to be geographically contiguous and as compact as possible. All three proposed plans met this criteria. Voting precincts were also redrawn to be in compliance with State law. The advisory committee members submitted new names identifying these precincts. The Board has three issues to consider: the proposals for new county commissioner districts, a proposal for new precinct boundaries and the list of names identifying each new precinct.

Amber Cervantes, Elections Superintendent, went over the process used with the advisory committee. There were two members from the Democratic Central Committee, two from the Republican Central Committee, two from the League of Women Voters and two staff members from the Auditor's office. One discussion was regarding the size of the precincts. A bill from the Legislature allowed the Elections department to change the precincts from 900 to 1,500 voters per precinct. Everyone was happy with the sizes of the precincts that were chosen. The committee voted to come up with the three different commissioner district boundaries. There was also renumbering of the precincts. It was indicated that it was preferred to have names as well as numbers. Staff and the committee came up with the suggestions for precinct names. They tried to keep long standing precinct names as best as possible. She noted that they were the first office in the State to create an advisory committee to help with redistricting.

Cmmr. Sheldon commented on the benefits of voting by mail and asked if Ms. Cervantes knew the history of why District 2 is in a U shape around the Canal.

Ms. Cervantes didn't know the history, but could find out. She explained that her office paid more attention to the history of the precincts. She also commented on the cost benefits of voting by mail.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson asked if staff were voting members of the group because she would have recommended that staff not vote.

Ms. Cervantes explained that staff did vote as representatives of different areas of the county.

Public Testimony

John Piety testified that option number one looks the most equal on a map. If you weren't a political person option one would show that your Commissioner is as good as any other Commissioner. Political people know that the number of voters are equal in the other options. He also suggested that every precinct get a new name to avoid confusion with old names.

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Andrew Graham thanked the Board and the Auditor for the open process in which they chose to do the redistricting. There were a variety of people on the advisory committee with different perspectives and different agendas, but they worked well together. The options the committee came up with are superior as to what there is now. It was a good process and he hopes it is done the same way when redistricting happens again. He thought the briefing on this issue was enlightening. He wished he had heard that conversation earlier in the process. He suggested that there should be a preliminary briefing for future redistricting so it is clear what the Commission sees as things to emphasize. Had the advisory committee known the opinions of the Commissioners they may have submitted different plans.

Mr. Piety thought that the committee did an excellent job without the Commission because there were no preconceptions.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson asked what the Board's voting parameters were.

Ms. Herr explained that the Board must wait a week to vote. Her office did not want to delay the decision farther than that because there are other districts awaiting the decision on the precincts in order to start creating their plans, which are due in November. The Board must legally vote by November 8th.

The Board thanked the committee and the Auditor's staff for their work.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson stated that a decision would be made before November 8th and the action would be on a future Commission agenda.

Cmmr. Sheldon thought that the action needed to take place on a specified date so the fire districts and others waiting on the decision would have the information.

Cmmr. Sheldon/Lingle moved and seconded to close the public hearing and to take action at the August 2, 2011 regular Commission meeting. Motion carried. S-aye; L-aye; RE-nay.

Cmmr. Lingle brought up an issue regarding an employee incident that resulted in a significant amount of damage to County assets.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson thought that the employee issue should be discussed at a later time in an executive session.

4. Adjournment – The meeting adjourned at 1:29 p.m.

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BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MASON COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Lynda Ring Erickson, Chair

ATTEST:

Tim Sheldon, Commissioner

Shannon Goudy, Clerk of the Board

Jerry K. Lingle, Commissioner