

MINUTES

BOARD OF BENTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Special Board Meeting
Wednesday, March 20, 2013, 10:00 AM
Commissioners' Conference Room
Benton County Justice Center, Kennewick, WA

Present: Chairman Shon Small
Commissioner James Beaver
Commissioner Jerome Delvin
Clerk of the Board Cami McKenzie

Benton County Employees Present During All or a Portion of the Meeting: Finance Manager Keith Mercer; Planning Manager Mike Shuttleworth; Sustainable Development Manager Adam Fyall.

Conservation Finance Workshop – Trust for Public Lands

Dee Frankfourth, Trust for Public Lands, gave a Powerpoint presentation that included the following:

- Services
 - Conservation finance, transactions, park design and development, research and development, vision
- State and Local ballot measures 2002-2012 - total \$24.4 billion conservation funds approved; did not appear to have anything to do with political persuasion
- Key questions in conservation finance: jurisdiction, funding mechanisms, amount and duration, voter support/tax tolerance, purposes/uses of funds, timing - choice of election date, management accountability, opposition
- Critical steps for successful ballot measure
 - Feasibility research (fiscal capacity, legal issues and election history, assess open space)
 - Public opinion survey
 - Program recommendations
 - Ballot language
 - Campaign
- Local - Washington conversation success
- Conservation Futures Property Tax - created by state legislation in 1971 - enables counties to exact a tax up to \$6.25 per \$100,000 value by resolution or ordinance of County Commissioners; or you can ask for an advisory ballot (with or without a sunset clause); gave history of this tax in Spokane County; 13 counties in WA State have adopted the Conservation Futures Property Tax
- Next possible steps for Benton County: consider conservation needs; the county requests technical assistance from Trust for Public Lands; Trust provides a feasibility report; Benton County considers whether it wants to execute a public opinion survey

Commissioner Delvin asked about any restrictions regarding state matches. Ms. Frankfourth said they helped get the local money, but it would be up to Benton County what they did with the money. Commissioner Delvin also asked about their experience with ballot measures that might be competing since there were other local issues (aquatic, mental health, fire fighter, criminal justice). She said if these were county needs being discussed, sometimes you had to stand in line. However, sometimes the other issues didn't have the same due diligence as the Trust for Public Lands. Additionally, they could poll alongside the other issues to see what voter priority was. She said there was a bond funding issue that came up in the City of Kirkland for operation, maintenance, and capital with perpetuity to cover all parks, permanent lifeguards during the summer, and acquisition. She said a transportation issue polled higher than the parks but the parks ended up with more support at vote time, even though they both passed.

In response to a question about time frame, Ms. Frankfourth said it was about nine months from beginning to going to ballot. Alternatively the Board could also do an advisory ballot for a futures tax.

Commissioner Beaver commented that bond measures were usually not driven by commissioners but by an outside agency or committee and they seemed to be somewhat successful. He said he was wondering why the commissioners would be in the middle of this and was concerned about the commissioners pushing this agenda.

Ms. Frankfourth said the commissioners still had to refer the issue to the ballot and they had found that since they were eventually asked to refer to the ballot, it was better to be involved in the beginning. She said they were just letting them know this issue may come to them.

MOTION: Commissioner Delvin moved to go forward with requesting a letter to the Trust for Public Lands to request their technical expertise for Benton County. Commissioner Beaver seconded.

Chairman Small asked about the other 13 counties in Washington and how they arrived at their target funding. Ms. Frankfourth said that \$6.25/\$100,000 was the maximum amount; some were \$2.00 and each body decided the right amount for their community. She said the opinion survey could test the other projects and drill down on some of the projects and prices.

Commissioner Beaver said they had to know what they wanted and then they could figure out how much. He said he appreciated what Benton County had, and if they didn't do something, it would be gone.

Commissioner Delvin said he assumed the Tapteal Greenway group would bring that forward as far as what was needed. Ms. Frankfourth said they work with the County to find out what the residents wanted.

Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Scott Woodward said he was very appreciative of the Board's courage and this issue had been talked about for some time. He said they felt the timing was right; they wanted local control over local issues and could not count on the State or Federal government any longer.

The Board recessed at 10:55 a.m., reconvening at 11:06 a.m.

Emergency Management – Hanford Radiation Training – Columbia Generating Station

Brian Calvert and Jeremy Beck said this yearly training was a requirement of the grant to continue to maintain funding.

The Board received a training exercise from Benton County Emergency Management regarding a potential radiation exposure emergency at the Columbia Generating Station and the steps that would be taken in the event of that emergency.

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

Clerk of the Board

Chairman