

COMMISSIONERS RECORD 52  
FRANKLIN COUNTY  
Commissioners' Proceedings for January 15, 2014

*This document is a summarized version of the Board of Commissioners proceedings. The minutes are paraphrased, not verbatim. Access to an electronic audio recording of the meeting is available upon request.*

The Honorable Boards of Benton and Franklin County Commissioners met on the above date at the Benton-Franklin Health District meeting room, Kennewick, Washington. Present for the meeting representing Franklin County were Robert E. Koch, Chairman; Brad Peck, Chair Pro Tem; and Rick Miller, Member. Present for the meeting representing Benton County were: James R. Beaver, Chairman; Jerome Delvin, Chair Pro Tem; and Shon Small, Member.

Meeting convened at 3:00 pm. At least 23 people were present in the audience including staff members from both counties and other interested parties.

#### **HUMAN SERVICES (HS)**

HS Administrator Ed Thornbrugh met with the Boards.

Agenda items:

General discussion on Human Services Operations and Governance

Crisis Response Unit Leasing Options Discussion, Direction and Possible Decision

At the end of the meeting, the two Boards agreed to meet jointly on a monthly basis to try to make bi-county operations stronger. Some discussion topics that led up to that decision are noted below.

That statement was made that the first listed purpose of the bi-county meeting was because a question had been raised: How should we approach problems, particularly when there is a difference of opinion between the two boards?

Mr. Thornbrugh said one example is regarding the leasing options for the Crisis Response Unit. The process started in September and has not yet been resolved. Another example is handling labor negotiations. There is no agreement that governs how bi-county Human Services should be run if there is disagreement between the two counties. The process is that a bi-county meeting will be called but the delays the process causes are substantial.

Discussion included:

- The need to give better, more specific, concrete guidance on what the Commissioners want.

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- Noting that we are two separate boards representing two separate sets of interests in two counties and we are not always going to agree.
- A question of what kind of language would be incorporated in a Memorandum of Understanding that would prevent two counties from having competing interests.
- Finding out what bi-county Human Services Departments have done that is successful, such as Chelan-Douglas and Thurston-Mason Counties.
- Idea to consider putting all employees of a bi-county agency as employees of that county rather than being bi-county employees.
- Creating a strong MOU about how joint agencies operate and how decisions are made that can be used by staff to give certainty about their responsibilities and duties. Some factors that would need to be considered are:
  - who would facilitate union negotiations
  - which county would be used
  - what would the pros and cons be
  - who would pay
  - how costs would be shared. Would it be the traditional 30/70 split or something different? Would it be based on service? Would it be different for the Juvenile Justice Center compared to Human Services?
- At some point in time the programs were put into a combined format so presumably somebody saw merit in that. It's clear there are some economies involved in running one system rather than two independent ones. A client agency not being the operator doesn't have as much fiscal control and therefore doesn't have control over their costs, which was the primary purpose for combining departments in the first place. Cost controls would have to be a key element.
- Physical condition of Juvenile Justice Center, particularly administration.
- Superior Court needs.
- Considering creating MOUs or revamping how agencies are functioning.
- Asking Human Services Administrator Ed Thornbrugh and Juvenile Justice Center Director Darryl Banks to provide input.

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- assess and evaluate and see what we need to do to make things run more smoothly.

Mr. Thornbrugh noted that one aspect of the HS Department is most of the funds we're using to purchase services and care are pass-through funds, not directly linked to Current Expense or special fund budgets. The Commissioners do have a responsibility to see that the people using the services are served appropriately. It is a subtle difference compared to the courts or the Juvenile Justice Center.

Mr. Peck asked if there is a legal option for a third party, an independent nonprofit entity that receives funding directly from the state, to operate the program in which both counties could be participants. Mr. Thornbrugh said it is not realistic for the Human Services work and explained further.

Mr. Thornbrugh responded to a question about how duplicate monitoring has been eliminated.

The Human Services Department provides administrative oversight for services performed by contracted providers, provides crisis services out of its office, makes decisions and sets policy for contracted clinics and programs, and provides oversight for use of housing funds by both counties. The state provides the money for most of the services. The two counties have significant variations in their policies on use of housing funds.

In response to a question, Mr. Thornbrugh briefly explained some of the problems in working with two different boards related to personnel management. Employees are hired through Benton County and work under Benton County's personnel policies but the wages and benefits are determined on a bi-county basis so there has been some disparity that can become a problem for recruitment and retention of staff over time. He explained the need to recruit and retain crucial staff who have the needed job abilities, skills and experience so we don't create risk for the counties.

For the many, many contracts that are monitored by Human Services, all of the banking involving Federal, state and local funds is done through Benton County, so Benton County is carrying a risk if there is a state auditor finding.

Board members from both counties expressed the opinion that the functions should remain as joint bi-county operations.

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Mr. Thornbrugh was asked to write specific things that the bi-county operation by its nature contributes to making his job difficult and if he has some ideas to also provide proposals on how to mitigate or eliminate those obstacles.

Mr. Beaver said we want to make the organization stronger. Let's go through the process and see if we can find ways to make it work better.

Crisis Response Unit Leasing Options Discussion, Direction and Possible Decision

There was discussion about the proposed lease. The site selection criteria included: accessibility for clients, affordability, location of allied agencies that help provide home and community services, and transportation for clients and for mental health providers (CDMHPs) who have to be sent to other locations.

Mr. Thornbrugh answered some questions about the proposed lease that Mr. Peck had asked him prior to the meeting regarding *total cost, options to terminate early, tenant improvement costs, equity in the property, and criteria used to select a site.*

In response to Mr. Peck's question, Mr. Thornbrugh favors the property on Morain Street. He places a high value on having allied partners in the same location, primarily because of the risk in two populations: senior/disabled adults and people who have involvement with the Department of Corrections.

**Motion** – Mr. Peck moved move for approval as currently articulated in the draft before us. Second by Mr. Koch. 3:0 vote in favor.

**Motion** – Mr. Small moved for approval of the Crisis Response Unit agreement for property at 500 North Morain Street, Kennewick Washington, as presented. Second by Mr. Delvin. 3:0 vote in favor.

Bi-County Meeting Schedule

The two Boards agreed to meet jointly on a monthly basis to try to make bi-county operations stronger.

**Benton County adjourned at 4:09 pm.**

**Franklin County adjourned at 4:09 pm.**

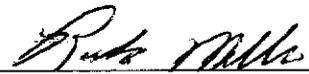
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There being no further business, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners meeting was adjourned until January 22, 2014.

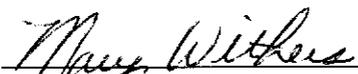
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
FRANKLIN COUNTY, WASHINGTON

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert E. Koch, Chairman

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Brad Peck, Chairman Pro Tem

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rick Miller, Member

Attest:

  
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Clerk to the Board

Approved and signed January 29, 2014.