

MINUTES

BOARDS OF BENTON AND FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Special Bi-County Board Meeting
Wednesday, May 19, 2010, 3:15 p.m.
Commissioners' Conference Room
Benton County Justice Center, Kennewick, WA

Benton County

Present: Chairman Jim Beaver
Commissioner Leo Bowman
Commissioner Max Benitz, Jr.
County Administrator David Sparks
Clerk of the Board Cami McKenzie

Employees Present: Personnel Manager Melina Wenner; Interim Human Services Manager Ed Thornbrugh; Deputy Administrator Loretta Smith Kelty; Finance Manager Keith Mercer; Carrie Bayha, Human Services; Linda Ivey, Human Services; Ian Velasquez, Human Services; Cameron Fordmeir, Crisis Response; Gloria Caldwell, Crisis Response; Deena Horton, Crisis Response; Kyle Sullivan, Crisis Response.

Franklin County

Present: Chairman Brad Peck
Commissioner Rick Miller
Commissioner Bob Koch
County Administrator Fred Bowen

Human Services Administrator

Franklin County Chairman Brad Peck stated that based on the Health Board decision to proceed with hiring a new Health District Administrator, there was not a need to look at a consolidated Health District/Human Services Administrator position. Therefore, Franklin County was prepared to select a director for Human Services through the interview process from the individuals that were selected by the County Administrators.

Benton County Commissioner Max Benitz discussed the importance of having an interim Human Services Administrator and also presented a new job description for the position. He said he wanted to include housing and prevention in the description.

Chairman Peck discussed his concern with Benton County wanting to change the job description.

Benton County Commissioner Leo Bowman said the only change was adding the words “prevention” and “housing” and Benton County felt it was a better job description and didn’t feel it was a major change.

Franklin County unanimously stated it was not opposed to the changes in the job description as described by Commissioner Bowman.

Mr. Sparks stated that Benton County had continued to collect applications for the Human Services Administrator position since the cancellation of the interviews and he would review the new applications with Mr. Bowen.

Chairman Peck proposed the bi-county boards close the position at the close of this meeting and the county administrators select the top four candidates for interview. Franklin County unanimously agreed.

Benton County also unanimously agreed.

Commissioner Benitz requested the Board continue to keep Ed Thornbrugh as interim administrator until the position was filled. Chairman Peck stated that while Franklin County disagreed with the process of selecting an interim administrator, it was in agreement with the choice of Ed Thornbrugh.

Canal Street Building/Consolidated Crisis Response Center

Chairman Peck said the Health District Board passed a motion declaring the Canal Street building surplus and the next step would be to review the statutes for a process to dispose of the property. He stated that selling the building narrowed the options for a consolidated crisis response center (CCRC).

Chairman Beaver said it was Benton County’s intent to start the CCRC at the Canal Street facility. He stated that staff and construction people had been through the building and it was important for the counties to get the process started. Additionally, the building was large enough to accommodate a 16-bed facility.

Chairman Peck said that experts had been through the building, however, they were not cost estimators as to what it would take to make a state facility. He said he tended to favor the approach of a new building.

Commissioner Bob Koch wanted to know if the number was concrete and that number would need to come forward before they could make a decision.

Commissioner Bowman said he did not want to take unilateral action on hiring an architect.

The Boards discussed taking joint county action to hire a professional to provide a cost estimate and path for each option.

Commissioner Bowman said he was concerned about moving forward with a new building like the Health District building that could not be fully afforded. He said he agreed they should proceed with analyzing the Canal building to see if met the needs of the counties' first CCRC and then hire an architectural firm.

MOTION: Commissioner Bob Koch moved to approve pursuing a consultant to get numbers before a bid goes out, for further discussion, to remodel or look at a new building, depending on the amount of revenue available to us. Seconded by Commissioner Rick Miller. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

MOTION: Commissioner Bowman moved to parrot Franklin County's motion to hire an architectural and engineering firm to get better numbers.

Commissioner Benitz asked if he meant for remodeling of the Canal Drive building. Commissioner Bowman said yes. Commissioner Benitz seconded.

After discussion with Franklin County about its intent of the motion, Commissioner Bowman withdrew his motion.

Commissioner Bowman said he wanted to see the numbers on the Canal facility so it could be compared to the proposal for a new building that was previously brought to the Boards for review. He said if the research determined the Canal building was not adequate for the needs, the Boards could look at other options.

Commissioner Koch said he meant for his motion to look at the Canal building and also see how far the money would go and whether there was enough money to build a new building.

Commissioner Bowman commented there was a proposal with schematic drawings and cost estimates that was done prior. Chairman Peck said the previous building proposal would not necessarily reflect what the counties were interested in doing today.

Commissioner Benitz discussed the ability to increase the beds if the remodeling were completed at Canal. Additionally, he discussed a new funding formula that was being proposed by the state that would use zip codes. He said if the Boards moved forward with a new facility and used up reserve funds for capital, they could have a very nice facility with no money to operate it. He said he was in favor of a firm looking at what it would cost to remodel the building.

Chairman Beaver agreed the counties needed to hire a professional to determine if it could be remodeled for what was needed and what it would cost.

Commissioner Bowman said his motion was to mirror Franklin County, but without the need to look at a new building and that is why he retracted his motion.

MOTION: Commissioner Bowman moved to approve the same motion as made by Commissioner Koch to move this issue forward. Chairman Beaver seconded.

Discussion

Commissioner Benitz said there had not been any discussion if Developmental Disabilities would be provided, or if Mental Health, Substance Abuse and other services would now be provided out of this facility. He said he was not in support without definition of what services would be provided.

Franklin County said it concurred that the comparative analysis be apples to apples and advocated moving Human Services Administration into the new Health District building.

Chairman Beaver said he was in favor of getting the process started and then graduate to a new facility.

Upon vote, the motion carried with Commissioner Benitz opposing.

Commissioner Bowman requested the County Administrators provide a process for acquiring the architect and engineer to evaluate the infrastructure of the building and get numbers regarding size and cost.

Chairman Peck said that Franklin County would respond to the analysis quickly and would faithfully support what was in the best interest of the citizens.

Ed Thornbrugh stated that any licensed facility would need construction review by the Department of Health and would ultimately have to approve the building. He recommended involving them by applying for technical assistance.

The Boards agreed.

Public Comment

Gordon Bopp said the question by the Boards appeared to be what was driving it financially. He said they were talking about quality of lives and a lot of citizens were not being served. He discussed funding options available, including a sales tax and said the focus should be on an acceptable system of care for mental health patients. He recommended the Boards address the consumers and needs of the community and invest in a current facility that was comfortable, functional, properly staffed, and provided comprehensive services.

John Cox said they were looking at the personal fundamental needs of people and if the will was there, they could raise the facility. He stated there was nothing more expensive than buying a cheap appliance. He added that he was concerned about that as a taxpayer and that everybody was concerned about money, however, the basic needs should not be ignored.

Ed Fredenberg asked about the basis for building a 16-bed facility. Ed Thornbrugh said that facilities larger than 16 beds were considered “institutions” and funding formulas were limited.

There being no further business before the Boards, the meeting adjourned at 4:13 p.m.

Clerk of the Board

Chairman