

Legislative Roundtable

December 11, 2020

9:01 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Fund, Commissioner Jackson, Commissioner Stamper, County Manager Erik Martin, Commissioner-Elect Lindsey Pollock, Commissioner-Elect Sean Swope, Jami Lund, Cathy Kane, Claudia Yaw, Rep. Joel McEntire, Sen. John Braun, Rep. Richard DeBolt, Rep. Jim Walsh, Rep. Ed Orcutt, Rep.-Elect Peter Abbarno, Chehalis Mayor Dennis Dawes, Morton Mayor Dan Mortensen, Toledo Clerk Michelle Whitten, Toledo Mayor Steve Dobosh, American Forest Resource Council State Manager Matt Comisky, Washington State Association of Counties Executive Director Paul Jewell, Lewis County Sheriff Rob Snaza, Southwest Washington Fair Manager Tamara Hayes, marketing consultant Mary Kay Nelson, Southwest Grain Project Manager Mike Peroni, Lewis County Clerk Scott Tinney, Lewis County PUD Manager Chris Roden, Centralia Mayor Sue Luond, Ted Jackson WAATVA, Lee Montgomery, Debbie Campbell, Marilyn Fenn, Shelly Stewart, Paul Schechter, Jill Anderson, Megan Sibbert, Peter Lahmann, Celeste Dimichina WSDOT, Rob Hill, Steve Wohld, Nic Scott KELA, Lara McRea, LCSO, Chris Panush, Jeff Wilson, Kyle Markstrom, Lee Napier, Pam Peiper, Judge Buzzard, Trinidad Medina, Patrick Schults, Tina Hemphill, J. Vander Stoep, Chris Tawes, Becky Butler, Willie Painter LCPUD, Arny Davis

Guests: Numerous county employees and various members of the public and

press Recorder: Tammy Martin

Participants were introduced.

Flooding

J. Vander Stoep said the purpose of the Office of Chehalis Basin is to aggressively pursue implementation of the Chehalis Basin Strategy. The main goal is to reduce flood-related damage while also restoring aquatic species habitat in the Chehalis River Basin from Pe Ell to Aberdeen/Hoquiam. There are currently two proposals to provide flood mitigation, and they include a north shore levy in Aberdeen/Hoquiam and the upper Chehalis Basin for the water retention facility.

Timber harvests and forests

American Forest Resource Council State Manager Matt Comisky addressed key forestry issues, including possible noise revisits, efforts to accelerate Washington State's plan on land management and wildfire issues. He said to expect to see more requests of funding to meet Washington State's commitments to landowners, federal forest harvests to increase, and logging and trucking capacity issues between Oregon and Washington. There have been several successful timber sales within the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. Recently, there was good news coming out of Washington DC for road maintenance in the Gifford Pinchot as well as habitat changes for the spotted owl. DNR is looking at modifications to the harvest targets as well as looking for silviculture funding.

Unfunded mandates

Paul Jewell from Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) addressed several unfunded mandates the counties are legally required to provide such as elections and public defense. County governments are agents of the state government. WSAC has concerns that include revenue models that are not sustainable and many new mandates that do not include resources for implementation. Last year WSAC members filed lawsuits against the state of Washington on SB 5472 for unfunded additionally required ballot boxes. WSAC recently prevailed in the lawsuit. Paul Jewell said WSAC encourages fiscal responsibility.

Fish passages

County Manager Erik Martin spoke about fish passage and barrier removal. This falls under the unfunded and underfunded mandates. Due to tribal requests through the court systems, all state owned culverts need to be replaced. WSAC did a study on 14 counties requiring approximately \$14 billion to replace all the fish passages. In Lewis County, there are over 500 culverts needing to be replaced. Each project costs about \$500,000. Lewis County has been maximizing state grants and matching grants to fund these projects and completing these projects in a timely manner. Multiple entities and agencies are coordinating to benefit fish spawning as a priority to replace the culverts.

Outdoor recreation

Mary Kay Nelson said Lodging Tax revenue has had a 270.50% increase in the last 15 years. There are 25 designated byways in Washington State. Lewis County Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Strategic Plan was created from the Outdoor Recreation Summit in 2018. She said she enjoys being an advocate for Lewis County's Scenic Byway.

Multi-Use Roadway Safety Account for wheeled all-terrain vehicles (WATVs)

Ted Jackson of Washington State All-Terrain Vehicle Association (WAATV) said there is a multi-use safety account used to maintain signage, maintenance, education and enforcement of motorized recreation opportunities. In July 2013, Washington enacted a law requiring license plates on All Terrain Vehicles, House Bill 1632 (HB1632). The bill created a new class of recreational vehicle (a wheeled all-terrain vehicle / WATV) and provides motorized access to public lands while promoting responsible riding practices. Ted said there is an app for Washington Hometown that promotes businesses and supports WATVs.

Southwest Grain Project

Mike Peroni, representing the Southwest Washington Grain Project, said that he is the project manager and is focusing on the lack of infrastructure. A cooperative was formed to help Western Washington infrastructure and storage. There are 20 members spanning 5 counties. The Southwest Grain Project received \$800,000 in grants from the Distressed Counties fund to install a rail spur. They have also received grants and fundraising to support agriculture in our community. In 2020, Lewis County distributed 600 metric tons of grain.

Refund – such as the windfarm

Arny Davis said the refund to the Skookumchuck Wind Energy is a refund provided by the Washington Renewable Energy Sales and Use Tax Exemption. The Skookumchuck Wind Energy Project had approximately \$900,000 in refunds. Arny would like to see distributions for refunds held in a separate account instead of funded through the county's budget. He feels this would minimize errors and losses.

Transportation:

North Lewis County Industrial Access Lewis County Manager Erik Martin said this project was prompted by legislative action that created an interchange along I-5 by the Steering Committee Group and its purpose was to create 1000 family wage jobs by 2030. Since that time, Lewis County and WSDOT have had to readjust priorities to include the traffic impacts. There is a traffic analysis to be done for Harrison Avenue traffic and congestion.

Rush Road interchange WSDOT, the city of Napavine and Lewis County are dealing with a lot of truck traffic and congestion at the Rush Road interchange. WSDOT is looking into some potential upgrades. Hopefully, in 2021 the future of the interchange should support the community.

Commissioner Fund brought up the Blakeslee Junction area issue. There is large homeless camp in excess of 20 people. Washington State is looking to sell the property as surplus and needs help to clean up the camp. Whoever purchases the property will inherit the issues. There are needs for response from law enforcement as well social services to help clean up the camp. There are waste issues that will need to be dealt with and it's an unsafe environment. This issue has been a problem for over seven years. Sen. Braun feels this would require help from multiple agencies and municipalities to work together in effort to clean up the property. Rep. Orcutt stated that WSDOT has been aware of the situation and that as the current owner, they should have an obligation to maintain that property.

Water-sewer improvements

Packwood Erik Martin said there is a flood plain study currently to verify impacts. He said they are trying to remove it from flood plain mapping for development.

Winlock Erik Martin said Beneroya is working on construction at the Lowe's Distribution Center. They are working to finish up the Mickelsen Parkway. The city is actively working on sewer and water for expansion.

Collecting legal financial obligations

Lewis County Clerk Scott Tinney said collecting legal financial obligations has been an ongoing issue resulting in revenue shortages. Historically, the defendant is ordered to pay costs to offset the revenue spent to prosecute the crime including jail, criminal fees and extradition costs. Most of these costs that are paid by the defendant have been switched to be paid by the county. The average defendant currently pays \$600 in mandatory fees. This is no longer paying the costs to prosecute the individual. Scott is urging the representatives of the state to think about new incoming bills asking defendants to pay less because this places a larger financial burden on the counties. From the judicial perspective according to Judge Buzzard, he feels that taking fine, fees and costs act as a punishment. If this is not accomplished, this not only takes away from the county financially, but also negates the punishment of the crime.

Broadband technology

Lewis County PUD Manager Chris Roden said that the state of broadband in Lewis County is sadly inefficient. He said that LCPUD supports providing funding to assist needed infrastructure for

broadband telecommunications. Out of the surveys sent, results indicate that broadband is a necessary tool. LCPUD is planning and strategizing projects to seek funds that will be best matched to available funding that will benefit subscribers/users. The LCPUD will be hosting communitywide efforts to come up with the best options available to solve the problem of inefficiency.

Mayor's roundtable – 3 minutes each

Commissioner Stamper thanked Larry Grove and staff for a smooth election process this year. Commissioner Stamper said that infrastructure updates to the east end of Lewis County will be advantageous. He is also looking for access. Tourism is valuable to Lewis County. It is very important to work on sustainable harvest. This is a timber county. Commissioner Stamper thanked our federal partners as well. He thanked both outgoing Commissioners for being seat mates. He appreciates all they have done for Lewis County. Mossyrock Mayor Sasser said he is tied up, but wanted to explain that the events that are taking place are not sanctioned by the city council or the mayor. There has been some press from people outside of Mossyrock and this is not representative of the city.

Commissioner Jackson said it has been his honor and privilege to serve the county and its people. He wished the new commissioners success in their endeavors.

Sheriff Snaza thanked the outgoing Commissioners and asked the new representatives of Washington State and Lewis County to be aware of bills being passed that do not benefit the people. He asked them to be mindful of individuals affected by the COVID-19 virus. He hopes that as you move forward, that a plan is created to offer encouragement to all community members.

Chehalis Mayor Dawes thanked our state senators and state representatives for their time and willingness to represent Lewis County. He wishes to know locations of clusters or large numbers of COVID-19 patients, negative results and the possibility of identifying by zip code. He feels that being transparent is the best course. He encourages the representatives give more control back to the people instead of to the party they represent. He is asking for less unfunded mandates. He is concerned about police reform. There needs to be more consideration and thought to reform policies.

Vader Mayor Joey Shey said the city of Vader is about to go out to bid for an Ecology-mandated project. He feels this is detrimental to the city and its residents. He is reaching out to officials for financial assistance.

Commissioner-elect Lindsey Pollock said there are a lot of problem-solving opportunities for Lewis County.

Commissioner-elect Swope said he is looking forward to serving Lewis County

Rep. Orcutt thanked every individual for their service. He looks forward to building new relationships with the incoming members.

Commissioner Fund said that even though the Involuntary Treatment Act (ITA) was not addressed, we should all be aware of the impact it has.

Meeting adjourned at 11:48 a.m.

