

## **Mayors' Meeting**

**May 5, 2023**

**9:01 a.m.**

Present: Commissioner Swope, Commissioner Brummer, Commissioner Pollock, Interim County Manager Steve Wohld, Eric Eisenberg, John Anderson of Gov. Inslee's office, Pe Ell Mayor Lonnie Willey, Centralia Police Chief Stacy Dehham, Economic Alliance Executive Director Richard DeBolt, Prosecuting Attorney Jonathan Meyer, Eric Sonnenberg, Kevin Anderson, Andy Caldwell, Randy Kaut, Rudy Rodriguez, Port of Centralia Commissioner Kyle Markstrom, Tanisha Harris of Sen. Cantwell's office, Josh Metcalf, Becky Butler, Todd Chaput of the Economic Alliance, Mindy Brooks, Napavine Mayor Shawn O'Neill, Chehalis City Manager Jill Anderson, Centralia Mayor Kelly Smith-Johnston, Chad Hancock of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Paul Mason of WSDOT, Lewis County Budget Services Manager Becky Butler, Sheriff Rob Snaza, Violet Barboza, Undersheriff Wes Rethwill, John Brockmueller, Rich Underdahl, Carol Brock, Jenn Libby-Jones, Cameron Kockritz of Rep. Gluesenkamp Perez's office, Nic Scott, Willie Painter of the PUD, Kate Chatterton, Meja Handlen, Peter Lahmann

Guest(s): Isabel Vander Stoep

Recorder: Rieva Lester

**Public comment on any final-action items on this agenda:** None.

**Roundtable and requests for assistance or input:** City and port representatives gave project updates. Pe Ell Mayor Lonnie Willey said the city needs an additional \$200,000 for its intake structure.

**Potential local fix in response to Blake decision (regarding felony drug possession):** Prosecuting Attorney Jonathan Meyer said county staff has drafted an ordinance that would make the possession of controlled substances gross misdemeanor. He said the ordinance can be put in place if the Legislature is unable to come up with a Blake decision fix during its upcoming Special Session.

The group discussed Drug Court, court fees, unfunded mandates and other topics related to the Blake decision. They noted that the cities could use the county's proposed ordinance as a template for their own ordinances regarding controlled substances.

### **Combined User Committee (CUC) proposal for 911 tax**

Centralia Police Chief and Combined User Committee (CUC) Chair Stacy Denham discussed the CUC's proposal for a 911 sales tax. Chief Denham said the 911 center costs \$5.5 million annually and the current budget is \$3.4 million. He said the CUC is asking the BOCC to put to a vote a sales tax to fund the dispatch center. He discussed a two-tenths of 1 percent sales tax, which would provide the funding needed, or a one-tenth of 1 percent sales tax, which he said would not provide enough funding. Chief

Denham said the two-tenths of 1 percent would allow for the creation of new facility to house 911 communications.

The group reviewed the estimated amounts that would be collected: With one-tenth of 1 percent bringing in \$2.6 million and two-tenths of 1 percent bringing in \$5.2 million. The group discussed the need to ensure tourists and other visitors who use emergency services are helping cover those costs, something that could be accomplished through a sales tax.

Chief Denham discussed outreach regarding the request. He said the CUC is made up of representatives from the various emergency service districts in the county and that the voting members are proposing the ballot measure. He outlined reasons the group is requesting a 911 sales tax rather than a public safety tax.

Commissioner Brummer requested the fire commissioners issue their request – or a letter of support – for a 911 sales tax in writing.

Sheriff Snaza noted that the proposal is the culmination of roughly eight years of work. He discussed the need to fund the 911 center.

Carol Brock noted that the next Fire Commissioners' meeting is at 6 p.m. May 15 in Salkum.

Commissioner Brummer noted that the deadline to issue the sales tax request to the Auditor's Office would be Aug. 1.

### **Announcements / new business**

Paul Mason of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) discussed upcoming and ongoing WSDOT projects. Commissioner Brummer alerted him to problem areas along Highway 12.

Richard DeBolt said the Economic Alliance will hold present its year-end report and stakeholders information during the June Mayors' Meeting.

Rieva Lester reminded the group that the July and August Mayors' Meetings had been canceled (summer break) and that the September meeting will be delayed a week to accommodate those who will be out of town for the Labor Day holiday weekend.

Meeting adjourned at 10:37 a.m.