

Meeting with Larry McGee and Anil Puri

April 15, 2019

2 p.m.

Present: Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund, County Manager Erik Martin, Anil Puri, Larry McGee

Guest: Dr. Lindsey Pollock

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Larry McGee asked what has changed since the introduction of a county manager.

Commissioner Fund said the addition of a county manager has freed her up to devote more time to legislative matters. She noted that Erik Martin also has testified at the Legislature.

Erik noted that he spends roughly 4 percent to 5 percent of his time on outside boards.

Erik said he spends the bulk of his time on operations.

Commissioner Stamper said he has been freed up to spend more time on economic development, etc.

Erik said he directly oversees the eight department heads. He said he now meets with those department heads instead of having the commissioners meet with them.

Erik and Commissioner Stamper said Erik serves as a point person for constituent complaints, helping gauge whether it's a matter that requires a code change or whether it's a one-person issue.

Commissioner Fund said internal issues, such as elevator repairs, are directed to Erik and that the media now contacts him instead of asking the commissioners for comments.

Erik said he came in with no preconceived notions, so he hasn't been shocked by anything as of yet. He said the directors seem to appreciate the move as an improved efficiency. He said his prior interactions with the board and the directors helped make the transition more smooth. Erik said he is working on a resolution that outlines his delegated authority.

Erik said he isn't sure whether the delegated authority could be codified.

Commissioner Stamper said Erik's Public Works background have been very helpful when it comes to questions about roads, recycling, etc. He said having Erik on board gives the county another problem-solver.

The group indicated that the commissioners also have been freed up to get more frequent updates regarding code enforcement. Erik noted that that gives the county the opportunity to better address recurring problems that could be alleviated through code changes.

The commissioners said they haven't fielded any complaints from individuals who want to speak directly to a commissioner instead of the county manager.

Erik said some electeds reach out to him, whereas others don't.

The group discussed the time efficiency Erik's role has created.

Commissioner Fund noted that meetings with Erik alone are not subject to the Open Public Meetings Act.

Erik said he has been working closely with Budget Services Manager Becky Butler. He noted that one change resulted from Becky's suggestion to change the budget-setting dates.

Erik discussed unfunded state mandates as well as moves at the state level that hamper the county's ability to recoup costs.

Larry McGee said it seems that Erik's position has paid for itself. The commissioners agreed.

Erik said he has received a little bit of pushback from individuals who were used to close contact with the commissioners.

Erik said he has scaled back his recurring meetings a little bit, especially when a meeting isn't necessary.

Anil Puri said people are talking about Erik as a problem-solver.

Commissioner Fund praised Erik's relatability. She said it's beneficial to have him meet with city and PUD managers. Erik noted that he meets with the city managers, port directors, school superintendents and others monthly.

The group discussed the impact Drug Court is having locally. Anil noted that Centralia College has taken an active approach to helping the Drug Court participants secure their GEDs.

The group discussed the speed of government as being deliberately slow as the public wouldn't want elected officials to speed through decisions.

The group discussed reviewing Erik's performance in August, after he's been in the position for a year.

Commissioner Fund said it's been nice to have Erik be the point of contact for the BOCC office staff.

Meeting adjourned at 3:02 p.m.