

PA Update

August 4, 2020

2:01 p.m.

Present: Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund, Cullen Gatten, Amber Smith, Jonathan Meyer, Brittani Bonahoom, Eric Eisenberg, Natalie Dunlap, Steve Walton, Becky Butler, Tammy Martin, Kevin McDowell, Tawni Shepherd, Steve Wohld

Guest(s): Various members of the public

Recorder: Lara McRea

Salaries:

Jonathan said he was alerted that the board approved more raises and expressed his frustration that the employees in his office were underpaid and not being appreciated for their work. He also said that bargaining units were forced into a two-year contract.

Jon sent an email to Erik and Steve Walton last week regarding the issue. He also noted an employee from Superior Court was recently increased from a grade 19 to a grade 21.

Commissioner Stamper asked if the position went through the normal process with HR, and Steve Walton said he knew it did but Daleyn could speak to the details of it when she is back in the office.

Commissioner Stamper said he felt the PA's Office should be market positions.

Steve Walton said they are looking to make a selection on a consultant for the salary study soon. He also said that bargaining agreements were negotiated for 3 years and not 2 years. Steve further discussed the bargaining agreement process.

Jon noted that the Legal Assistants in Juvenile are making more than the Legal Assistants in the PA's Office.

He said that many have employees left to go to work in the neighboring counties and that it cost the county \$10k more to replace his former Office Manager.

Commissioner Fund agreed that many talented employees leave to find employment in neighboring counties and it is hard to keep them in Lewis County.

Commissioner Stamper noted he would like to discuss this topic at an upcoming meeting and would also like to review the salary information that Jon discussed and also had addressed in his memo to Erik and Steve. The discussion will be around what the circumstances were around certain raises.

Training:

Jon suggested the county should look at training county-wide for employees. This type of training would not only help them as employees but also as people. He said COVID has been trying on everyone and suggested some type of mental training to help people better cope with situations like this.

Becky Butler noted she is waiting to hear from the Department of Commerce if this type of training would be covered by coronavirus funds.

Steve Wohld joined the meeting at 2:20 p.m.

Jon discussed an online component 30 day training that is about \$97 per person. He noted this type of training would help people perform better in their jobs and life.

Tawni mentioned that the county has the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that could be beneficial to some employees.

Jon said when their office went through a reorganization, key employees took an advance form of training to help them be leaders in the office.

COVID-19

Becky said she reached out to Eric Eisenberg and Amber and sent them the policy requirements on the CDBG-CV1. Amber noted that Eric looked into and thought the requirements were overreaching but felt it was better to comply.

Becky said the county would have to adopt a policy regarding excessive force and the greenhouse emissions. She said this seemed out of place as the use of funds was for utility and rent payments for moderate income individuals. They are also deferring to Mason County. There is more research being done by WSAC on this issue. She said it sounded like this is a federal law and not state imposed.

OPMA

Cullen Gatten discussed the 10 people attendance rule if the county chooses to allow in person attendance at their meetings as opposed to remote.

He said the OPMA waiver allows the option to any phase 3 county to maintain remote access for the public or it may allow the public to attend meetings but would have to meet the conditions of the state. This would include wearing masks, social distancing requirements as well as occupancy requirements.

They understand from some communications with WSAC and the governor's office that the limit of attendees was to extend to 10 people for a gathering but was also to extend to meetings.

There is some information coming from MRSC that is indicating that this also applies to 10 participants to include employees. So the total would be 10 with everyone. He said this interpretation was not clear and when a business is being conducted this typically does not apply to the staff and the caps would not apply. The staff would need to attend the meetings.

He noted this was consistent with the other advice from Governor's office on what the 10 person gathering limit applies to. This doesn't apply to business activities, which is what the county does.

He said it is up to the board's discretion on how they would like the meetings to go.

He did recommend that if the board would like the public to attend, then they should encourage employees to attend remotely when possible. If the board wanted to allow the public to attend in person, then a satellite office would be needed for an overflow space.

Cullen recommended having the public attend by remote access only as this would reduce disease transmissions.

He said the options under the waiver are remote access only or let the public attend in person and have overflow rooms available.

Amber said the individuals dropping off ballots are conducting regular business and will not be restricted. The employees will continue to process ballots and those numbers will not be capped. If a group of people were gathering and reading the elections screen then the security officer may ask them to step outside or ask them to check the numbers online. The number needs to be at 10 or fewer people.

The board said they will keep allowing the public to come in and attend meetings until a decision is made.

Becky discussed grants to nonprofits.

Steve Wohld discussed overflow rooms and said they could look at using room 121 or WSU meeting room. The rooms would need TV's and feeds.

Cullen said it would be difficult to find rooms with distancing measures and if the feed has an issue the meeting would have to stop.

The group discussed the amount of people that could be in the courthouse to view the election results. Amber noted that the foyer area is one gathering place. If there were more than 10 people then some would have to disperse. People coming in to drop off their ballots are there for business purposes and therefore do not count towards the 10 max.

At 3:02 p.m., Commissioner Stamper announced that the Board was going into Executive Session under RCW 42.30.110(1)(i) for 15 minutes (to discuss L&I investigation, Concrete School District Case, ongoing Cortland & Green litigation, O'Connor v. Lewis County, Middle Fork Water Sewer System).

At 3:18 p.m., the Board extended Executive Session for 5 minutes.

Executive Session ended at 3:23 p.m. Commissioner Stamper noted that no decisions had been made.

Commissioner Stamper made a motion to direct the Lewis County Prosecutor's Office to appeal the decision in O'Connor v. Lewis County, cause number 19-2-04897-34, and direct the Auditor's Office to pay into the Thurston County Superior Court registry in the form of a supersedeas bond in the amount of \$20,780.43.

Commissioner Fund seconded.

Motion passed 2-0.

Eric discussed block grants and said it may appear the state was attaching certain conditions to the funding. He said those conditions are already inherent to the funding and they are in the federal law. The feds require them as part of their block grant program. He said they are generally broad policies.

Meeting ended at 3:39 p.m.