

## **Mayors' Meeting**

**September 6, 2024**

**10:00 a.m.**

Present: Commissioner Brummer, Commissioner Pollock, Commissioner Swope, Jennifer Queen Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Vader Mayor Joey Schey, Chehalis Mayor Tony Ketchum, Chehalis City Manager Stacey Denham, Veterans Apprenticeship Specialist / Centralia Port Commissioner Peter Lahmann, Paul Crouner, Lewis County Assessor Ross Nielson, Lewis County Engineer Geoff Soderquist, Stephen Dunk of the Department of Commerce, Caitlyn Harrington of Sen. Murray's office, Kristine Rompa PSE, Lewis County Public Health & Social Services Director (PHSS) Meja Handlen, Tanisha Harris from Senator Cantwell's office, Cameron Kockritz of Rep. Gluesenkamp Perez's office, Scott Seroshek WSDOT, E911 Communications Director Jenn Libby Jones, John Anderson of Gov. Inslee's office, Sarah Kohout of Rep. Gluesenkamp Perez's office, Lewis County Budget Administrator / Risk Director Becky Butler

Guest(s): Mitchell Roland, Kody Christen

Recorder: Tammy Martin

**Public comment:** None

2025 Legislative priorities:

Cameron Kockritz of Rep. Gluesenkamp Perez's office. Cam said the office is working hard to support local veterans and work towards passing a bipartisan bill.

Vader Mayor Joey Schey said the City of Vader provided the firework show this year. Mayor Schey said the sewer treatment is in final design stage and construction is set to begin in 2025 and they are currently in process of the city stormwater drain cleanup. Mayor Schey said Vader applied for grant funding for park updates. He said Vader ranks 23<sup>rd</sup> as an eligible recipient. This in effort to bring tourism to Vader. Mayor Schey said there will be a fundraiser at McMURPHY Park to establish future concert events and an amphitheater. He also said the new home building subdivision #1 is complete. They are trying to accommodate 25% growth for the city of Vader. Mayor Shey said PUD fiber is being installed and that he is grateful for the upgrade for his community.

Veterans Apprenticeship Specialist / Centralia Port Commissioner Peter Lahmann thanked Ross Nielson for a levy rates presentation. Peter informed the group that Winco construction is progressing. Peter also spoke to the group about PacMTN. Peter said he is also the apprenticeship specialist for veterans. He partners with JBLM. He'd like to encourage Lewis County to post job openings with JBLM. Peter said he spent time with the Community Outreach/Veterans Benefits coordinator Patrick Gouldbourne at the Southwest Washington Fair. Peter asked as a legislative priority to start the process of including a spouse for veteran's survivors' benefits.

John Anderson of Gov. Inslee's office said the Legislative session begins in January. The priorities will be up to the next gubernatorial. John said there have been budget requests and needs concerning case weighting and what that process looks like. John said this is the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of paid family medical leave and nearly \$5 billion has been paid out.

Caitlyn Harrington of Sen. Murray's office said the Senate Appropriations Committee advanced 11 of the 12 appropriation bills. Should these pass, funding for the Centralia College clean energy accelerator project will advance. Senate reconvenes Monday Sept. 9.

Chehalis City Manager Stacey Denham said there is a growth issue they are trying to deal with. Stacey said there is a water pinch point, and the lack of adequate water supply prevents the growth of the city. Lewis County as a whole is affected by growth issues and the water needed to supply to support communities. Stacey said Green Hill School and the problems associated with the center continues to be a large concern. Stacey said the school and its troubles adversely affect the city. He said this is a group effort from state and local agencies. Stacey said there has been considerable expansion at the Chehalis Airport. Stacey said location is the largest benefit to the airport.

Kristine Rompa from Puget Sound Energy (PSE) thanked the Commissioners and the office group for their work completing the PSE franchise.

Lewis County Budget Administrator / Risk Director Becky Butler said the Broadband project phases 1-3 have been completed and deadline for ARPA was quickly approaching. Becky said June sales tax collections saw a 10% drop over the same time period last year.

Lewis County Assessor Ross Nielson said levies and values are underway. The Assessor's Office conducted a levy presentation, and his office will answer any questions cities may have about the process.

Lewis County Public Health & Social Services Director (PHSS) Meja Handlen said there is an event to prevent fentanyl usage called Facing Fentanyl Together happening on Sept 20<sup>th</sup> at Centralia College and there will also be an event specific to Spanish speakers Sept 28<sup>th</sup>. Fliers and information will be provided soon.

Jennette Queen from WSDOT Chehalis said construction on SR6 and SR508 still have additional bridge repair and striping left to complete. This is expected to be complete by mid-October. The phase one of the ramp meter project will be ongoing through November. There will be a continuation of the ramp meter project early next year and is expected to be completed in May 2025.

E911 Communications Director Jenn Libby Jones said combined user meetings are still on-going.

Stephen Dunk from the Department of Commerce offered the group his assistance in navigating grants, addressing priorities and funding sources.

Tanisha Harris from Senator Cantwell's office said there were group efforts on behalf of Senator Cantwell's office and Rep. Gluesenkamp Perez's office to provide letters of support for Toledo a fish passage project, Chehalis airport grant, and to visit Cascade Community Health Care. Tanisha also discussed the work with medical centers in Morton and Packwood.

Commissioner Brummer said legislative priorities for 2025 will include the North County Interchange, Southwest Washington Fair arena, the Packwood sewer, and elevator modernization for County buildings. Commissioner Brummer said it is important for the cities to work with the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> District Legislators. Commissioner Brummer informed the group there is support for lobbying the legislative group for funding and asked for the cities to ensure we are all engaged. Commissioner Brummer reminded the group that the Legislate Roundtable is scheduled on Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup>, and this is a collective effort.

Commissioner Pollock said the Ceres Hill Rd. Bridge is also on the priority list as well as Napavine / Winlock exits.

Meeting adjourned at 10:39 a.m.