

Minutes for December 2nd, 2002

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060445 THE BOARD OF WHITMAN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS met in their Chambers in the Whitman County Courthouse, Colfax, Washington for **December 2, 2002** at **10:00 a.m.** Greg Partch, Chairman, Jerry Finch, and Les Wigen, Commissioners and Diana Dawson, Recording Clerk attended.

10:00 a.m. - Board Business.

D060445A 1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Dean Ferguson

D060445B 2. Motion by Commissioner Finch to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion **seconded** by Commissioner Wigen and **carried**.

060446 3. Claims/Payroll warrants numbered 143215-143235 for **\$148,948.44** approved.

FUND	FUND NAME	AMOUNT
001	Current Expense	8,929.16
105	Mental Health	1,066.60
107	Chemical Dependency	355.59
112	Public Facilities Improvement	10,617.09
118	Inmate Welfare	228.76
690	Clearing & Suspense	127,751.24

060447 4. November 25, 2002 minutes approved.

060448-060454 5. Personnel board orders approved.

060455 6. The Board submitted Commissioner Les Wigen's name via email to Scott Merriman, Washington State Association of Counties for consideration of appointment by the Governor to the State Building Code Council.

D060455A 7. Commissioner Finch gave a status report on the transfer of the airport to the Port of Whitman. The transfer has been completed and the insurance was canceled.

D060455B 8. Commissioner Partch noted that November 29, 2002 Whitman County turned 131 years old.

10:30 a.m. - Karl Johanson, Council on Aging and Human Services/COAST.

060456 9. Motion by Commissioner Wigen seconded by Commissioner Finch and carried to accept the Rural Mobility grant bid of Western Bus Sales in the amount of \$50,948. The bids did not include additional features, which must be installed at a later date.

10:45 a.m. Recess.

11:00 a.m. - Mike Berney, WCCS Director.

Present: John Peterson

D060456A Motion by Commissioner Finch to go into Executive Session with Mr. Berney for discussion of contract negotiation matters until 12:00 p.m. **Seconded** by Commissioner Wigen and **carried**.

11:30 a.m. Ron Shirley

12:15 p.m. - Return to Open Session.

1:15 p.m. - Kelli Campbell, Human Resources.

D060456B Ms. Campbell informed the Board that the middle of December our current Employee Assistance Program (EAP) would be ending. Deaconess is discontinuing this service. We have several options. One, the counselors currently providing this service will be setting up a private office and will continue providing the same services at the same cost. Another option is Washington Counties Insurance Pool plan. Commissioner Partch instructed Ms. Campbell to check the cost of both options compare the services and return with a recommendation.

1:30 p.m. - Nancy Mack and Fritz Hughes, Pullman Trust.

Present: Eunice Coker, Tim Myers

D060456C Ms. Mack described the current trail and showed plans for future development to connect the downtown area to college hill. The Downtown River Walk will include pedestrian trails, seating and a cobblestone plaza. There will be 1,250 feet of paved walkways and two bridges. Completion for the walk is scheduled for summer 2003. The total cost for the trail is \$750,000. \$62,00 has been raised and a gift of \$120,000 has been received. Several grants has been applied for.

2:00 p.m. - Board Business Continued/BOCC Workshop.

Present: Ron Shirley, Jim Kaufman, Ann Shannon, Tim Myers, John Peterson and Alicia Johnson

D060456D Items discussed included Risk management, pending law suits, Tracy letter, Assessor budget, voting status on committees, LEOFF I retirement, Libey letter on bid process, and Classification system 3 positions
No action taken.

2:30 p.m. Dane Dunford

3:00 p.m. - Recess.

7:00 p.m. - 2003 Preliminary Whitman County Budget.

Present: John Peterson, Charlie Oldenburg, David Lange, Randy Suess, Lona Criswell, Bill Criswell, Jim White, Sally Burkhardt, John Elwood, Russ Staska, Ken Hathaway, Bev Welch, Randy Baldree, Doug Flansburg, Bob Lothspeich, Evan Ellis, Bob Reynolds, Tim Myers, Kurt Kimberling, Mike Werner, Hack McBride, Dean Ferguson, Marlynn Markley, Doug Robinson and Donna Robinson.

060457 Chairman Partch convened the public hearing for the proposed 2003 Whitman County budget and gave instructions regarding the hearing procedures.

John Peterson reported there was 1.2 million revenue shortfall due impart to I695, low interest rates and 776 limiting property tax increases. After the first initial cuts were made \$950,000 was left of which \$300,000 will come from the reserve fund leaving \$650,000 that would need to be cut from the department budgets. The department heads and elected officials asked that they be provided with a bottom line dollar amount and they would make decisions on where to reduce their budgets. All departments had budget reductions even though they many not show as a negative amount this as due to the fact that medical insurance went up 26% and L & I rates increased from 43%-72.1%.

Commissioner Wigen pointed out that he has gone though the budget process for 8 years and reserve funds have been used every year to balance the budget. In 1997 the departments were asked to use 1995 budget amounts.

Commissioner Finch told the audience that there was a lot of hard work that went into the preparation of the preliminary budget and reductions were not easy. Fair treatment for everyone was a priority. The County is no different than individuals, when income drops the standard of living must be adjusted. There are programs that are mandated and must be supported.

Randy Suess spoke in support of Cooperative Extension. We have no Agronomist on staff and Randy Baldree does a good job of managing a small staff that is required to do a great amount of work.

Kurt Kimberling, 4H Vice Present, reminded the Commissioners that Cooperative Extension takes care of our kids and the fairgrounds need to be maintained to provide the end result for our kids and their projects.

David Lange, Whitman County Farm Bureau, pointed out that Cooperative Extension provides agriculture to our urban residents.

John White encouraged the Commissioner to provide the Cooperative Extension a flat budget and make no cuts.

John Elwood spoke in support of the County Parks. We are going to have to come up with some creative thinking. We have already lost Central Ferry Park and with the celebration of the Lewis and Clark train coming in 2003 we need to have our parks available. Maybe a small fee for use may be appropriate. Parks are a social service and we shouldn't lose them. This is an area of economic growth and provides a quality of life.

Jack McBride also supports the Park department. Our staff is small in comparison to other areas. The staff does more with less. Parks give directly back to the tax payer.

Mike Werner pointed out that our park system has been present for about 33 years and the Whitman County Fair for 100 years. We have to be cautious about cuts. "It is better to build kids than fix adults."

Charlie Oldenberg wanted to remind the audience that there was no talk about layoffs. All employees will continue to be employed. Cuts have to be made to services.

In closing Commissioner Partch stated that the reductions have not been easy or taken lightly. The budget is not final and the information received would be considered. He thanked all who attended and gave their input.

Hearing recessed to December 9, 2002 at 10:30 a.m.

9:00 p.m. - Adjournment.

D060457A Commissioner Finch **moved** to adjourn the **December 2, 2002** meeting. Motion **seconded** by Commissioner Wigen and **carried**. The Board will meet in regular session, in their Chambers', in the Whitman County Courthouse, Colfax, Washington, on **December 9, 2002**. The foregoing action made this **2nd** day of **December 2002**.

ss/ JERRY FINCH, Commissioner
ss/ LES WIGEN, Commissioner

DIANA DAWSON
Recording Clerk

GREG PARTCH, Chairman
Board of County Commissioners