

**SNOHOMISH COUNTY  
Charter Review Commission**

**Minutes**

**Wednesday March 22, 2006, 6:30 p.m.**  
**Public Meeting Room No. 1**  
**First Floor, County Administration Building East**  
**Everett, Washington**

**Commission Members Present:** Kim Halvorson, Gail Rauch, Ryan Larsen, David Simpson, Diane Symms, Christine Malone, Mike Cooper, Mark Bond, Jim Kenny, Kristin Kelly, and Rick Ortiz.

**Commission Members Excused:** Eric Earling, Wendy Valentine, Renee Radcliff Sinclair, Barbara Cothorn Hawksford.

**Others in Attendance:** Paul Blowers, Geri Modrell, Evelyn Spencer, Carl Rankin Jr., Mark Hintz, Steve Smith, Peter Wilkie, Ed Moats, Ron Ledford, Cindy Portmann, Dylan Malone, Steve Reinig, and Allena Olson.

**Call to Order:** Chair Cooper called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes:** Commissioner Kenny proposed corrections to page 2 paragraph 3. Other corrections were also noted, including the Commissioner Bond's name under members present, as well as the accidental omission of Commissioner Sinclair's name.

**ACTION:** Commissioner Rauch made a motion that the minutes of March 15, 2006 be approved as corrected. Commissioner Kenny seconded the motion, and all commission members present unanimously approved it.

**Approval of Agenda:** **ACTION:** Commissioner Larsen moved that the agenda for the meeting be approved. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rauch, and unanimously approved.

**Guest Speaker:** Cindy Portmann, Snohomish County Assessor. Ms. Portmann presented her opinion on many of the proposals put towards the Commission. These proposals included biennial budgeting, County Council size, appointed vs. elected, term limits, and others. Please see the attached information for a more detailed description of Ms. Portmann's presentation.

**DISCUSSION:** Chair Cooper asked Ms. Portmann whether or not she felt it was a good idea to combine the positions of the County Assessor and Treasurer. Ms. Portmann

replied that she did not believe this was a good idea. Ms. Portmann stated that she believed the positions should remain separate for reasons of accountability.

Commissioner Kelly asked Ms. Portmann if she had heard anything from the public on the topic of term limits. Ms. Portmann replied that she believes the voters would like the ability to choose whether or not people could return to office.

In her presentation Ms. Portmann said that she felt it would have been easier for her to run as a partisan candidate. Commissioner Symms asked Ms. Portmann why she felt that way. Ms. Portmann replied that many of the voters were not aware that it was a non-partisan race and constantly asked what party she was a member of. Commissioner Symms continued, asking if there was anything she found in her experience that was dictated by one of the parties. Ms. Portmann replied that there was not.

Commissioner Kenny asked Ms. Portmann to go into more detail about her thoughts on the line item veto, and also what she thought it might do to alter the balance of power now in place. Ms. Portmann replied there should be a line item authority with supermajority over ride by the council. She believes sectional line item authority gives the Executive the ability to veto a section and not an entire ordinance. As far as the balance of power goes Ms. Portmann said she feels that the balance of power would remain the same.

Commissioner Rauch asked Ms. Portmann how she thought the Salary Commission ought to be chosen. Ms. Portmann answered that the Commission shouldn't be modeled exactly like that of the state level but that the Commission should be made up of citizens that are chosen by the elected officials.

Commissioner Ortiz asked Ms. Portmann how we would know when the county had reached the trigger of 700,000. Ms. Portmann replied that the Planning Department should have a pretty good idea of when that would happen, and as far as the exact time of expanding the Council, that would be left up to the Commission.

Chair Cooper asked if there were any overlapping responsibilities between the Assessor and the Treasurer, and if the Treasurer were eliminated and some duties transferred to the Finance Department, how would this affect the Assessor's office. Ms. Portmann replied that the Assessor calculates all the county rates and it is the Treasurer that takes those rates and collects the taxes. Any changes for any of the constituents are also given to the Treasurer to re-calculate. She continued saying that this would be a lot to put on the Finance Department. Chair Cooper stated that Pierce County has combined the Treasurer and the Assessor. Ms. Portmann said that she didn't know how that office handled this.

Returning to the topic of Council size Commissioner Kenny asked Ms. Portmann to elaborate on her comment that there would soon be a loss of accessibility if the Council were not expanded. Ms. Portman said that she felt as the population increases and more people would like to speak to the Council members those council members will not have

enough time to meet with everyone and there would be a loss of accessibility to the public.

Commissioner Ortiz asked Ms. Portman about the national disaster support system, and if there was a back up plan. Ms. Portman replied that there was a plan and that the Assessor's office plays a large role in going out and adjusting property values if a disaster were to occur. Commissioner Ortiz asked how Ms. Portmann if rates were set via budget or rates.

Commissioner Symms commended Ms. Portmann on her office's web site.

Commissioner Kenny commented that other cities have these positions filled by appointed individuals and asked why they were elected positions here. Ms. Portmann replied they were elected positions here because that is what the voters wanted. Commissioner Kenny then asked if it were more efficient this way. Ms. Portmann commented only that she had met many interesting appointees in her time but that she was not extremely knowledgeable on that. Commissioner Kenny inquired whether the executive would be held more responsible if the positions were appointed. Ms. Portmann replied that most people who have an issue call that specific office, not the Executive.

Commissioner Bond pointed out that with elections some feel that the individual may not have all the required knowledge they may just have charisma and a way with people. Ms. Portmann replied that that while this may be the case in some situations the same could be said for those who are appointed into certain positions.

Commissioner Halvorson commented that she was very impressed with the Assessor's office. When she had a situation and needed assistance the Assessor's office was very helpful, and that she approves of having an elected Assessor.

Chair Cooper said that he was interested in land valuation relationships between incorporated and unincorporated parts of the county. Ms. Portmann said that the information on that was currently available on the website.

**Comments by the Chair:** Chair Cooper stated that the ECAF had been submitted, and that they seem to have the continued support of the Council on the budget. Chair Cooper mentioned that he would like to have vouchers officially approved at meetings, and that he would like a couple of volunteers to perhaps meet early on the days of the meetings to approve them. Commissioner Simpson agreed to meet with the Chair to review and make recommendations to the entire commission related to approval of vouchers. An addendum to the Rules of Procedure would be required as well.

A memo was received from Ms. Dykes replying to an inquiry from Commissioner Kenny about the number of Commissioners that could be involved in an online conversation without having it be considered an online meeting. Ms. Dykes replied that the number qualifying for online meeting status was eight Commissioners.

On the topic of the legal council contract Chair Cooper requested the authority to sign the contract as soon as he had the approval on the budget from the Council.

**ACTION:** Commissioner Kenny moved that Chair Cooper be authorized to sign the contract for legal council as soon as the budget was approved by the Snohomish County Council. Commissioner Ortiz seconded the motion, and all commission members present approved the motion.

Chair Cooper mentioned that Commissioner Earling had mentioned that the Commission might want to begin meeting with editorial boards to explain what the commission was doing and to drum up interest as the debate begins. Please let Steve know if you wish to participate.

The topic of meeting times outside Everett was again raised. Many Commissioners would like those meetings held outside Everett to start at 7 p.m.

**ACTION:** Commissioner Rauch moved that meetings held in districts other than Everett, start at 7 p.m. and end at 8:30 p.m. Commissioner Kenny seconded the motion, and all commission members present approved the motion.

**Public Comment:** Mr. Paul Blowers spoke on his interests in growing government and his opinion on the topic of increasing the size of the County Council. Mr. Blowers stated that he sees no push to up the number of Council members. He also stated that he feels that the County Auditor, as well as the Assessor should be elected positions. He feels that the individuals in those positions should realize that they are working for the people. Mr. Blowers stated that he feels the Executive should be an appointed position. He felt the County Executive should know that he works for the County Council.

**Issue Discussion:** Discussion commenced among the Commissioners on the topic of elected vs. appointed. It was mentioned that information was continuing to be collected from numerous sources.

The topic of the size of the County Council was also discussed. The addition of employees and aides was discussed as well as the addition of Council members. The option of putting this topic on the ballot and letting the public decide was also discussed.

**Administrative Report:** The Commission was given an updated copy of the survey results published on Survey Monkey, as well as a draft of the questions that will appear on the next edition of the survey. There was more discussion on having those who take the survey give information on which district they are from. There was also mention of the addition of a comments section to the survey.

The web page has been updated. There are presentations, agendas and minutes now available for public consumption.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

**Minutes Submitted by:**

Allena Olson  
Recorder