

**SNOHMISH COUNTY
Charter Review Commission**

Minutes

Wednesday March 29, 2006, 7:00 p.m.

Public Meeting Room

Arlington City Hall

Arlington, Washington

Commission Members Present: Kim Halvorson, Ryan Larsen, David Simpson, Dianne Symms, Mike Cooper, Mark Bond, Barbara Cothorn Hawksford, Jim Kenny, Wendy Valentine, Kristin Kelly, Rick Ortiz, Eric Earling, Renee Radcliff Sinclair.

Commission Members Excused: Gail Rauch, Christine Malone.

Others in Attendance: James Cummins, John Baker, Dave Ridgeway, Barbara Chase, Esther Van der Berg, Geri Modrell, Paul Blowers, Mike Wiegand, Steve Reinig, and Allena Olson.

Call to Order: Chair Cooper called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Agenda: ACTION: Commissioner Symms moved that the agenda for the meeting be approved. Commissioner Hawksford seconded the motion, and all commissioners present unanimously approved it.

Guest Speaker: Rick Bart, Snohomish County Sheriff. Mr. Bart presented the Commission with his thoughts on several topics, including those of elected officials vs. appointed, fiscal policies, partisan vs. non-partisan, the Department of Corrections, term limits, and courthouse security protocol. Please see the attached information for a more detailed description of Mr. Bart's presentation.

DISCUSSION: Commissioner Simpson asked Mr. Bart where he saw the Sheriff's Department going in the future. Mr. Bart replied that he would like to see the Department get stronger. Growth in the community means a growth in crime. Mr. Bart would like to see the number of Sheriff's Deputies continue to grow in the next ten years. Mr. Bart continues saying that he thought that the future of the Sheriff's Department may also include the formation of a Metro Police Department, the combining of the Sheriff's Department and local Police Departments.

Commissioner Halvorson inquired as to the thoughts of Mr. Bart on the formation of a Grants Management Office. She asked how he thought that would aide the Sheriff's Department in there duties. Mr. Bart stated that a Grants Management Office would be very helpful to the Department in getting the funding they need to carry out their duties.

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He stated that right now he has a few people that write grants for the Department but that full time grant personnel would indeed be beneficial.

Commissioner Sinclair asked Mr. Bart specifically if the Sheriff's Department needed a full time grant writer. Mr. Bart replied that the grant writers would be kept busy regardless of whether they were in a Grants Management Office, or specifically assigned to individual departments.

Commissioner Sinclair asked Mr. Bart if the County Marshalls report to the courts. Mr. Bart replied that at last check the Marshalls reported to the Facilities Department. Commissioner Sinclair continued, stating that this setup presented a volatile situation. Mr. Bart agreed with Commissioner Sinclair and said that he would like to see the Marshalls be supervised by the Sheriff's Department.

Commissioner Hawksford asked Mr. Bart why, if his office were so busy, would he want to move the Department of Corrections to be under the direction of the Sheriff's Department. Mr. Bart replied that while it would not make his job any easier it would streamline operations and put everyone involved on the same page.

Commissioner Kenny mentioned the disciplinary problems that Law Enforcement Departments in Seattle are having and the formation of their Office of Accountability. He asked Mr. Bart if he felt the need for civilian oversight in Snohomish County. Mr. Bart replied that Snohomish County does have civilian oversight and input right now. He stated that those aspects are very beneficial, and that the key to keeping them is having the Sheriff be an elected position.

Chair Cooper asked Mr. Bart how Snohomish County compared in size to other Sheriff's Departments. Mr. Bart stated the Snohomish County Sheriff's Department is the largest police agency in the county, the third largest Sheriff's Department in the state, and one of the top ten police agencies in the state.

Chair Cooper inquired as to how having an elected Sheriff takes the politics out of the office. Mr. Bart replied that it does not take politics out of the office. Chair Cooper asked how having an elected Sheriff affected the performance of the Sheriff. Mr. Bart answered that an elected Sheriff has power by the Constitution. An elected Sheriff can speak to the council freely and not have to worry about offending or upsetting the person that appointed them.

Chair Cooper said that it appears that the Sheriff Department's problem with grants lies with getting the Council to sign off on the grants. Mr. Bart stated that he would like to make the process part of the Charter. Mr. Bart stated that he does not want to continually argue with the Council about this issue, but that if he doesn't it won't get done.

Guest Speaker: John Koster, Snohomish County Councilmember. Mr. Koster presented the Commission with his views on the division of long range planning, the Performance Auditor, Council size, elected vs. appointed, biennial budgeting, and term limits, along

with several other topics. Please see the attached information for a more detailed description of Mr. Koster's topics and viewpoints.

DISCUSSION: Commissioner Kelly asked Mr. Koster how putting long range planning under the County Council would work. Mr. Koster noted that long range planning is in effect policy making which is the responsibility of the council. Mr. Koster stated that the Department head, at this point, is put in a difficult position, he is trying to serve two masters, the Exec who appoints him and council which makes policy. Commissioner Kelly also inquired about Mr. Koster's position on biennial budgeting, and if he thought that a yearly budget delays other issues. Mr. Koster replied that budgeting takes a lot of time no matter what, and that if it were called biennial budgeting or not there would be time taken every year to analyze and adjust the budget.

Commissioner Ortiz asked Mr. Koster how he thinks we can achieve efficiency and accuracy in budgeting. Mr. Koster replied that it is hard to do. It is hard to predict what legislation will do, and also what the economy will do. If something goes different than planned in dealing with a biennial budget the budget will then be off for the entire next year. If policies change in the middle of the biennial budget this could also present a problem.

Commissioner Ortiz asked Mr. Koster then, is accuracy more important the efficiency. Mr. Koster replied that accuracy is always important, but that efficiency has yet to be seen with biennial budgeting.

Commissioner Sinclair asked Mr. Koster on his thoughts about having the possibility of reviewing a biennial budget and making adjustments. Mr. Koster replied that in order to accomplish that the legislature would have to be very disciplined to stay on course and only address those specific changes needed, and it is very hard to get legislature to focus. Commissioner Sinclair continued asking if Mr. Koster thought that the same amount of time would be spent on making corrections on a biennial budget as there would be in creating a new annual one. Mr. Koster replied that there would be the same amount of time spent on correction as there would be on creation.

Commissioner Sinclair asked Mr. Koster how much of his time now was spent on the budget. Mr. Koster replied that the budget consumes staff time from the third week of September to the end of the year, which comes out to be around 25 – 30 percent of their time. Commissioner Sinclair then asked how much of Mr. Koster's time was spent on Boards and on responsibilities of Committees. Mr. Koster replied that he could not come up with a figure off the top of his head, and that he would have to take some time to figure that out.

Commissioner Sinclair asked Mr. Koster about constituent relations and the county, if he would choose to give that responsibility to an ombudsman. Mr. Koster replied that he would choose to spend his own time on constituent issues. There was previously an ombudsman, and while it was a help to the Council, that position had been removed.

Commissioner Sinclair said that Mr. Koster's proposal on eminent domain seemed like a policy issue. She asked Mr. Koster how it would fit. Mr. Koster replied that there is specific language on websites.

Commissioner Kenny asked Mr. Koster for his opinion on sectional vetoes, and the balance of power. Mr. Koster replied that he was not opposed to sectional vetoes.

Commissioner Symms asked Mr. Koster about the difficulty that Mr. Bart had spoken about in getting approval on spending that had already been approved. Commissioner Symms asked whether or not Mr. Koster has experienced this and what can be done to fix it. Mr. Koster replied that all elected department heads go through the same process.

On the topic of biennial budgeting, Commissioner Earling asked Mr. Koster if he thought that besides saving money this could also make things more efficient. Would there be a benefit to the Executive Offices in having more time for other things. Mr. Koster said that he did not think that would be the case.

Chair Cooper asked Mr. Koster if he would support a change in the Charter that would support the Salary Commission. Mr. Koster answered that he would indeed support that.

Public Comments: Mr. Mike Weigand spoke of his concern with the relationship between the County, to whom he pays taxes, and the Tulalip Tribe. Mr. Weigand is concerned about the rights and options of non-tribal citizens that live on the Reservation. Mr. Weigand gave the council examples of the behavior he was concerned about, and gave documents to Steve Reinig to give to the Commissioners.

Mr. James Cummins commented on the presentation and opinions of Mr. Koster. He stated that the Performance Auditor will always be political no matter where it is located. Personally he sees no reason to increase the size of the County Council. Department heads should be elected, not appointed. He agreed with the Councilman on the topic of term limits, and he also stated that in dealing with the Department of Corrections and the jail system, that any decision made should have a substantial amount of proof and reason backing it up.

Ms. Esther Van der Berg spoke on the topic of increasing the size of the County Council, and also on the topic of grants. In her opinion there is no need to increase the number of Council members. If there is a need for more council members that there should also be the formation of new districts. As far as grants are concerned Ms. Van der Berg is unclear as to why we must apply for money that is rightfully already ours. She said that it seems silly that it would be the best grant writer that would receive funds instead of the department that needed the money the most.

Commissioner Symms asked that the Commission have the ability to ask the public questions after their comments to gain more insight on their specific issues. Chair Cooper said that a time for questions could indeed be added to the agenda.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Minutes Submitted by:

Allena Olson
Recorder