

COLUMBIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BOARD MEETING

MINUTES

June 2, 2004

The Columbia County Board of Commissioners met in scheduled session with Commissioner Rita Bernhard and Commissioner Anthony Hyde, together with Sarah Tyson, Assistant County Counsel, and Jan Greenhalgh, Board Secretary. Commissioner Corsiglia was not present.

Commissioner Bernhard called the meeting to order and led the flag salute.

MINUTES:

Commissioner Hyde moved and Commissioner Bernhard seconded to approve the minutes of the May 24, 2004 Board/Fair/Parks meeting; May 25, 2004 Work Session; and May 26, 2004 Board meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

VISITOR COMMENTS:

None.

HEARING: PETITION FOR ROAD IMPROVEMENTS TO BLAHA ROAD:

As scheduled, the public hearing, "In the Matter of a Petition for Road Improvements to Blaha Road", was held.

Sarah Tyson gave a brief introduction. A couple of weeks ago, the Board discussed a petition that was received to pave a section of Blaha Road. The Board decided to hold an informal public hearing prior to formally processing that petition to give the public an opportunity to hear from the Roadmaster on some of the options available and the estimated costs involved. Dave is here to present his report and recommendation.

Dave Hill, Public Works Director, summarized his report to the Board. The Board has been petitioned by property owners along Blaha Road to form a Local Improvement District for the purpose of paving approximately 1300 feet of Blaha Road between the end of the existing pavement in the public right-of-way. Dave briefly reviewed Ordinance No. 85-5 which establishes the procedure for making improvements on streets and roads in unincorporated areas which are financed by special assessments. It is his understanding that 100% of the abutting property owners to the proposed improvement signed the petition supporting the formation of an LID. There are other property owners that are not abutting the road but will also be using it. Dave stated that the policy is not to put a chip seal on gravel roads any longer because they have more than they can maintain already, unless the residents along the road would contribute \$19,000 per mile. He reviewed the existing condition of Blaha Road and the work that would need to be done. The Road Department is planning to do an extensive chip seal program on

other existing asphalt surfaced "county roads" throughout the summer and it would be an opportune time to place an asphaltic-oil-matte (3 layer chip seal) on this section of Blaha Road. Dave went over the options and costs involved. To pave the road it would cost each property owner \$1,034.48. For an oil-matte it would cost each property owner \$161.31. His recommendation would be to have this section of the roadway paved with 3 inches of asphalt and then, as a bonus for this work, the County could accept it as a "county road". The standard for a county road is 4 inches, however, he could give some credit for it being chip sealed before and the first part of the road is a county road already. If this alternative is not acceptable, then he would recommend that the properties be assessed for an oil-matte surface to be performed by the County. He would also suggest that payment for this work be made within 30 days after the work is complete and the assessment is certified.

Sarah explained that because the petition received actually requests paving, the Board needs to take action on that issue unless the petition is amended by the property owners to request a chip-seal. That could be done by either withdrawing the existing petition and filing a new one or withdrawing the existing petition and request that the Board adopt a resolution to go forward with a chip-seal.

The hearing was opened for testimony.

Noel Thompson, 33550 Blaha Road: He has the most property abutting that property. He has been putting gravel on this section of the road probably every year since 1980. He would like to know how long a chip seal would last. He would be happy with any alternative that eliminates the dust. He will not object to anything the group decides on. Dave said that, depending on specific situations, an oil matte could last in the range of 8-10 years and paving, at least 20 years. Noel also noted that there are 3 school buses using this road, twice a day.

Colleen DeShazer, 33484 Blaha Road: She first submitted a letter from Scott & Jodi Tupper into the record. Colleen read her prepared statement and entered it into the record. She brought with her three notebooks full of 2 LUBA appeals where there are countless promises sited by two Commissioners as well as the developer of the subdivision that this road would not be an issue that would come back on the current property owners. She asked that the Board take the time to review those records. She feels that paving this road will cause a lot of problems whereas chip sealing would solve the problem. She is willing to share the cost for a chip seal, but will fight paving the road all the way. There are a lot of the property owners than can't afford to pay for paving. Commissioner Hyde reiterated that this hearing is a result of a petition. The Board did not initiate this. Colleen disagreed. She said that Commissioner Corsiglia had a county employee who lived on Blaha Road at the time, initiate this. She doesn't disagree that Blaha Road needs to be improved, but the way this came about was inappropriate. It should not have been initiated by Commissioner Corsiglia or a county employee.

Colleen also added that the County needs to look at the road where it dips. The culvert is sinking due to all of the increased traffic and the road is collapsing. This is on the county portion of the road.

Dave responded to the area where the culvert is collapsing. The Road Department is monitoring this because it is on the county portion of the road. The problem is that there is a mix of different types of culverts that were used. He agrees it should be replaced, however, he does not feel the road is in danger of collapsing.

Commissioner Bernhard has heard from some of the residents over the past few months. The two concerns seem to be the dust problem and damage to their cars because the road is so rough. Dave stated that a chip seal would eliminate both of those concerns.

With no further testimony coming before the Board, the hearing was closed. Based on what has been said, Commissioner Hyde would suggest going back to the property owners to ask what their preference would be, pave the road or amend the petition to chip seal it. Sarah stated that could be done by sending a letter to the property owners explaining the options and associated costs. No action is needed by the Board at this time.

Someone asked if a chip seal would meet the criteria for subdividing their property. Todd stated that, in short, it would not.

Terry Moss, 33355 Crown Point Drive. Mr. Moss asked for some clarification - if the road is paved would it be accepted as county road, if chip sealed it wouldn't. Dave stated that was his recommendation. Because of the number of school buses up and down that road, Mr. Moss is not sure that a chip seal would last the 8 to 10 years. He asked that the Board consider accepting this as a county road, even if chip sealed.

John May asked if that the terms of financing be included in the letter. Judy May stated that, in 8 to 10 years, the cost of an oil mat is going to be more than it is today because of increases in costs.

Sherrie Conyers asked about a question asked earlier about the ability to subdivide if the road is only chip sealed. Todd explained that paving would be required under the Subdivision and Partitioning ordinance.

The Board thanked everyone for their input and stated that a letter would be sent out to all property owners.

HEARING: INITIATING THE FORMATION OF THE NEW COLUMBIA HEALTH DISTRICT:

As scheduled, the public hearing, "In the Matter of Initiating the Formation of the New Columbia Health District", was held.

John Knight: Pursuant to Resolution No. 23-2004, the Board initiated the formation of a special district which would be in the name of the Columbia Health District, which would be a different district than the current Health District. The current health district is pursuing a plan whereby if

this new health district is created, the old health district would be dissolved. John reviewed the procedures set forth in the statutes in forming a district and the criteria that needs to be considered. After the hearing, the next step would be to set a final hearing to consider this proposal.

The hearing was opened for public testimony.

PROPONENTS:

John first stated that the packet of materials previously submitted by Skip Baker will be entered into the record, along with the Board meeting minutes of when those materials were submitted.

Skip Baker, Co-Chair of the Columbia Health District Coalition, Brian Burright, Co-Chair and Paula Becks, member of the Health District. Skip read a prepared statement into the record. There has been a reduction in health care providers setting up practice in the county and most of our health care dollars going out of the county. In May, 2001, the Columbia County Health Partnership was formed to improve the health care status in Columbia County. The project was funded by the Columbia Health District and others. Over several months of meeting, they have made recommendations about health care in out lying areas, urgent care, mental health, recruitment and retention and community control. The overall recommendation was to develop a Critical Access Hospital as the most appropriate vehicle to deliver the services needed and wanted for the community health assessment. In the summer of 2002, the Hospital Coalition was formed. This was formed to develop a plan to bring a Critical Access Hospital to Columbia County. The summary of this plan is to dissolve the current health district, for a new health district, establish a new tax rate and establish a hospital designated as a Critical Access Hospital. Boundaries were established based upon the most likely service areas. They have negotiated a letter of intent with Legacy Health Systems to manage the hospital. The location is proposed to be in the St. Helens area. If approved by the voters, the plan is to have the hospital open for business in late 2007.

Commissioner Bernhard asked about the concerns being expressed that the previous hospital having failed and what will make this one any different. Skip explained that the old hospital was a much larger, full service hospital, trying to meet all of the communities needs. It was also in a different time period. Back when Medicare and Medicaid was paying out much less. A federally designated Critical Access Hospital will receive 100% plus of the cost, not just a portion of the cost. We also now have a community that is much larger. It will attract health care providers, and it will provide jobs.

Commissioner Bernhard asked about the 24 hour emergency room. Brian Burright explained that the new health district would provide a 24/7 emergency room. This service will help lessen the demand on the emergency responders and local physicians.

Commissioner Hyde wants the issue of long term convalescent care on the record and the intention of the health district. The reason he brings this up is because it has been an issue for

these types of facilities in eastern Oregon. In looking at viability and revenue streams, they started to take on some long term convalescent care patients. We don't want to see this in competition with the long term health care providers. Skip explained that a Critical Access Hospital is a short term hospital, not a long term hospital. Typically, 2-3 days stay. It is not intended to be, nor is it supposed to be, for long term care.

Skip then went over the boundaries of the district and how they were determined. The hospital will be located in the St. Helens area and somewhat centrally located between the boundaries.

OPPOSED:

Thelma Bonar, Warren: She agrees there needs to be medical care here in Columbia County and would also like to see dialysis here. However, she is opposed to the formation of this new district. There have been a lot of questions about the old hospital so she did some homework on this history of the ownership and the costs to the taxpayers. She submitted a number of items into the record. There needs to be a better understanding of where the people's money is going. She is not against the hospital but this is the people paying for this. We lost one hospital, we don't need to lose another one.

John put the following into the record: Minutes of the 3/9/04 Work Session minutes; 3/17/04 Board meeting minutes; property tax statement of tax account #4104-022-00400; names of the Board of Directors for the Columbia Health District; list of property owners of Tax account #4104-022-00400; sample ballot of special election to be held on March 18, 1975; a certification of the ballot title for the special election to held on March 18, 1975; statement of ownership of Tax account #4104-022-00400; statement of the Health District building on Gable Road; two property tax statements of Thelma & Charles Bonar; an article from the Chronicle dated 12/4/75 showing the ground breaking of the facility; bargain & sale deed from the First National Bank of Portland to the Columbia Hospital District dated 11/13/53; and a warranty deed from the Sister of St. Joseph's Peace Health and Hospital Services to James Ding and Robert McDonald dated 7/5/91; article from the Chronicle dated 2/26/84.

Bert Mueller, 340 Hankins Drive, St. Helens: His wife is a nurse and worked at the previous hospital. If you ask most people, they would like to have a hospital in the area. He appreciates the work put into this, but it comes down to the financial feasibility of it. There are a lot of questions about what happened to the old hospital. Until those are answered, he is not sure if this goes out to the voters, there would be a very positive outcome. There are a lot of financial questions that need to be answered. He does however, agree that there needs to be a 24/7 emergency room. He would like to know if this hospital will accept all types of insurance coverage and he would also like some more specific information on the boundaries. Another question is what will happen if this hospital fails, are the taxpayers on the hook for that?

REBUTTAL:

Skip Baker responded to the questions raised. He submitted a written history of the old hospital into the record. Many of these questions will be answered if the Board approves the formation of this district, through meetings, newspapers and other avenues.

With no further testimony coming before the Board, the hearing was closed.

The Board recessed the meeting at 12:00 noon and reconvened at 1:00 p.m. with all present.

The Board proceeded with deliberations on the formation of the new Columbia Health District. John explained the procedure. Commissioner Hyde stated that many good questions were raised during the hearing and believes they have either been answered or will be answered during planned public hearings. Further, the Board has received a unanimous resolution from all three cities in the proposed district stating that they believe that initiating the formation of this health district is a good idea. With that, Commissioner Hyde moved and Commissioner Bernhard seconded to tentatively approve the formation of this district based upon a finding that the area as proposed would be benefitted by the creation of this district. Under discussion, Commissioner Bernhard reiterated that all three cities within the boundary agree with this. This process has been going on for over two years with hundreds of people involved in one form or another. There has been polling and a professional survey conducted. She feels that the emergency room part of this is very critical for the community. With the vote taken, the motion carried unanimously. John will prepare an order for Board approval.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Commissioner Bernhard read the consent agenda in full. With that, Commissioner Hyde moved and Commissioner Bernhard seconded to approve the consent agenda as follows:

- (A) Ratify the Select-to-Pay for 6/1/04.
- (B) Order No. 34-2004, "In the Matter of Selling to Scott Sylvester and Elena Sylvester Certain County-Owned Real Property Known as Tax Account No. 01-08 3224-023-05200".
- (C) Order No. 35-2004, "In the Matter of the Request by Randy Elder for a Modification from the Columbia County Road Design Standards for Justin's Way Public Road."
- (D) Approve the request by the St. Helens-Scappoose Chamber of Commerce to use the Plaza on June 19, 2004 for River City Days, subject to receipt of the insurance certificate and coordination with Bill Potter.

AGREEMENTS/CONTRACTS/AMENDMENTS:

- (E) Cooperative Improvement Agreement No. 20,706 with ODOT for the Lower Columbia River Highway at Scappoose-Vernonia Road Section.

The motion carried unanimously.

COMMISSIONER BERNHARD COMMENTS:

Commissioner Bernhard attended the annual Spring AOC conference in Welches last week. She came back with a lot of good information.

She attended the fireworks fund raiser on Saturday evening at the Elks which was very well attended.

On Monday, she attended the Scappoose veterans memorial service honoring the vets. That was also very well attended.

COMMISSIONER HYDE COMMENTS:

Commissioner Hyde briefly talked about the \$1 million dollar EDA award that the county received last week. This is a very big deal for the Columbia County. After that event, there was an important discussion with EDA on how they are going to fund economic development projects in the future.

Commissioner Hyde commented on discussions held at the AOC spring conference, one being how they are going to approach the upcoming legislative session dealing with the budget and potential impacts on our delivery of services.

On Monday, he attended a veterans memorial service in Vernonia but unfortunately the fly over missed their mark.

COMMISSIONER CORSIGLIA COMMENTS:

Not present.

The Executive Session was carried over to the Staff meeting.

With nothing further coming before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.

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Dated at St. Helens, Oregon this 2nd day of June, 2004.

NOTE: A tape of this meeting is available for purchase by the public or interested parties.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON

By: 

Rita Bernhard, Chair

By: 

Anthony Hyde, Commissioner

By: 

Joe Corsiglia, Commissioner

Recording Secretary:

By: 

Jan Greenhalgh