

# COLUMBIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

## WORK SESSION MINUTES

**April 8, 2003**

The Columbia County Board of Commissioners met in scheduled session with Commissioner Joe Corsiglia, Commissioner Rita Bernhard and Commissioner Anthony Hyde, together with John Knight, County Counsel, Sarah Tyson, Assistant County Counsel, and Jan Greenhalgh, Board Secretary.

Commissioner Corsiglia called the meeting to order.

### **TOM LINHARES: REQUEST TO FILL POSITIONS:**

As the Board is aware, the Data Analyst in the Assessor's office has retired and Alan King has been promoted into that position, which will become effective May 1, 2003. That leaves a vacant Property Appraiser II position. Tom is therefore requesting authorization to recruit for the Property Appraiser II position. If he cannot find a qualified Property Appraiser II, he will have to hire a Property Appraiser I, at a lower salary. Tom went over the work load in his office and they are barely getting by with the current staff. Commissioner Hyde recently read a letter from the Department of Revenue that stated the County may be in breach of grant funding requirements if these positions aren't filled. Tom is also requesting authorization to fill one Assessment Clerk I position and a half time Office Assistant for tax collection duties. After discussion, the Board added authorization for the Property Appraiser II position and Assessment Clerk I position to the consent agenda. The Office Assistant position to be discussed under the next item.

Jean Ripa gave her opinion on the need for a half time Office Assistant in the Assessor's office. The need is not yet known and she would suggest that the position be filled with temporary help until the need is determined. Tom feels strongly that the need is definitely there and explained his reasoning. If fact, they may find out this half time position may need to become a full time position. Discussion was held on some options, using temporary staffing, a retired person, etc. Tom would prefer to have this position filled by July 1<sup>st</sup>. The Board agreed the position needs to be filled, it's just a question of how to do that. Tom stated that if the Board is more comfortable with a temporary employee, he can live with that. The Board then added approval to hire a temporary person for the Assessor's office, on or after July 1, 2003. It was noted that this would be a .49 temporary position.

### **STAFFING CHANGES:**

Jean sent a memo to the Board regarding the staff changes in the Assessor/Finance/Treasurer departments. Commissioner Corsiglia read the memo and commented. He has a concern with wanting to lower one of the salary ranges from 24 to 22. He met with Sally to hear her feelings about this. It appears that when we have people on staff that have experience and background, that

value sometimes exceeds what it looks like on paper. There are some morale issues that need to be considered. He would be more in favor of freezing this salary instead of reducing the salary range. Jean would agree that change is hard because we are changing the status quo. She does not take any pleasure in making these recommendations, however she needs to recommend to the Board that the County pays positions an appropriate amount. Whether this is done by a cut or a freeze, is up to the Board. Jean cautioned the Board about setting any precedence. She would recommend that the position be assigned to salary range 22. She believes that is what the position should be classified at and that is what the market shows. It still may even be a little high for that position. If the Board decides on freezing this salary, she would recommend that the range still be reassigned to a range 22, and freeze the salary of the current employee until it catches up. Commissioner Hyde expressed his concerns with taking salary away from employees and would agree with a freeze as well. Commissioner Bernhard also commented. She believes that employees do plan on their salaries and have expenses based on those salaries. It is difficult for someone to have to take a cut in pay. She has personally been in this situation before and knows what it feels like. She understands it may look good on paper, but she feels that a freeze would be better than reducing the salary.

Sally Cicerchi approached the Board. She was informed of this recommendation last night at 4:45 pm and has not had time to prepare a response. She has not seen any salary surveys, and was just given the job description this morning. Sally asked that the Board reschedule this discussion for a later date to give her time to prepare.

Jean explained that the employees have an avenue for comments at a later date. This is simply the first step where the managers present a recommendation to the Board. As this moves forward, there is an appeal process for employees to use if they disagree with the recommendation. This is typically not the time to hear from employees. Jean explained why Sally was not informed about this until yesterday. After discussion, the Board agreed to freeze the salary of the Accountant position and added this to the consent agenda. All other recommendations outlined in Jean Ripa's April 4, 2003 memo were added to the consent agenda.

**BILL POTTER: CONCESSION/VENDING SERVICES AT COURTHOUSE:**

Commissioner Corsiglia had requested Bill recruit a contractor to provide a coffee and snack concession at the Courthouse. Bill drafted a proposal and circulated it last month to all department heads and elected officials to obtain comments, which he reviewed. There are a number of interrelated questions and problems that need to be addressed before proceeding. Bill went over the list of issues: location of concession stand; use of any county money for alterations; should the RFP include vending machines; where to advertise RFP, should private non-profits be allowed to have vending machines in the buildings, etc. After discussion, the Board felt the most appropriate site would be the old mail area on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor; no county funds to be expended on this project; include vending machines in the RFP; advertise County wide; non-profits will be limited to one candy machine. It was noted that if the site did not work out, the concession could be moved to another location. Bill will work with John Knight on the details of the RFP.

Bill brought up the issue of individual offices having coffee pots. Now that the County has a new break room, maybe those should be eliminated. He is referring to the home style coffee pots. The two issues are safety and, if we bring in a coffee cart, it takes away from there business. The Board felt this is not a good idea and this should be left alone.

**BENNETT PROPERTY - REQUEST TO REPURCHASE:**

Cynthia Zemaitis gave a brief overview of prior discussions held with the Board on this issue. There are 5 separate parcels, previously owned by Mrs. Dorothy Bennett, which the County received through tax foreclosure. Mrs. Bennett would like to be able to repurchase this property. She has paid \$40,000, on the \$64,000 owing, towards this property. The \$40,000 went to payoff the rental property, leaving a balance remaining of \$24,000. Mrs. Bennett asked if the Board would be willing to accept monthly payments or give her additional time to payoff the balance. Mrs. Bennett is present to discuss this with the Board. Jamie Sequoia, who manages the rental property, is also present. Ms. Sequoia reviewed the map to point out the rental properties and the Bennett's primary residence.

Commissioner Bernhard had previously questioned why the \$40,000 went towards the rental property instead of the primary residence. She asked if Mrs. Bennett has considered ways to come up with the money to buy back her primary residence, perhaps a second mortgage or equity line.

Mrs. Bennett explained that she needs the income from the rental property and had intended to use that rental income to pay the county monthly payments. She is will to pay any interest, penalties, etc. She asked if the county cannot accept monthly payments, how much time will she be allowed to come up with the full amount.

John stated there are some issues that need resolution. The primary residence is owned by the County, which the Bennett's are living in; the rental properties are owned by the county and occupied. This makes the county liable for any damages. John suggested that the County obtain a rental agreement with Mrs. Bennett, at a reasonable rate, have her provide insurance and obtain financing to pay this off in full.

The Board felt the best solution to this is for Mrs. Bennett to obtain financing to pay off the county in full. The Board understands that it takes time to go through the process to obtain funding and will some time. Cynthia will prepare the order conveying the rental property back to Mrs. Bennett for action tomorrow. She will continue to work with Mrs. Bennett on the repurchase of her primary residence.

**JOHN SLAPE - REQUEST TO WAIVE INTEREST:**

John Slape approached the Board regarding his request. He and Mike Avent purchased county-owned property, known as the Sprague property from the County at the auction. They submitted the down payment and was given 60 days to acquire financing to pay it off. They weren't quite

ready at the end of the 60 days and requested an extension, which was granted at 1% interest. They then notified that the County wanted to do a partition on the property to legalize it. They agreed to that and asked that interest be waived at that time and it was. His request is that the interest for the month of January in the amount of \$648 be waived. His request is based on the fact that the property was not legal when it was purchased and therefore not marketable. John would also be willing to wait until the end of May to get the partition completed. After discussion, the Board felt that because John is losing a return on this investment for another month, the Board agreed to waive the \$648 interest.

**PHIL DEWEY - REQUEST FOR FEE INCREASE:**

Phil Dewey presented the Board with his current fee schedule which hasn't been changed in 10 years. He has added his requested fee changes on the bottom for review. Phil went over the work he does and what all is involved. One of the major concerns he has is with checking plats. There are times when he has to check a plat 5 or 6 times and there is no way, under the present fee schedule, to recoup his costs. He is requesting that the fee be changed to allow him to charge \$60 per hour for additional checks. John Knight agrees that it is not fair to Phil to have to check these plats over and over without being compensated for it.

John explained that he would need to draft an amendment to the ordinance to change the fees and then a contract amendment with Phil. Commissioner Bernhard suggested that all surveyors be notified of these proposed fee changes.

Phil also talked about the fees he receives, turns over to the county and then has to file a claim to get those fees back. Phil doesn't see the need to even send the money to the County. He keeps a complete accounting of all monies he received. John read the legal opinion on this and is comfortable with what Phil wants to do, which is to simply retain the money.

After discussion, the Board directed John Knight to draft a proposed ordinance amendment to address fee increases for the surveyor.

**HIPAA PRIVACY RULE COMPLIANCE:**

John Knight reviewed his memo to the Board regarding HIPAA compliance. The deadline is April 15, 2003 for the County to address the rule. Therefore, John has drafted an order which adopts a policy on compliance with HIPAA, designate county health care components, designating a privacy officer and contact persons. John reviewed the order and named suggested contact persons at the County. The Board would rather see positions be named instead of individual names. With that, John would recommend that the order be approved tomorrow to meet the deadline. Also a contract amendment will need to be done with CCMH, which he has reviewed with Donna Tewksbury. Donna is in agreement with that and John will have that ready for approval tomorrow.

Training is also required under the HIPAA rules and that is already being scheduled for all appropriate employees, at a cost of \$15 per person.

**SARAH TYSON - MORSE BROS. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

Sarah wanted to review the format of the 5 public hearings coming up on Morse Bros. applications. This should be reviewed and agreed upon before the notices go out. Commissioner Bernhard had only one concern which is the time limit. She wants to make sure that the people have an appropriate amount of time but feels that 5 minutes should be enough. She also suggested that the loud timer not be used because it is very distracting. After discussion, the Board agreed with limiting testimony to 5 minutes.

**FAIRGROUND REQUEST TO WAIVE PERMIT FEES:**

The Board received a request from Evelyn Hudson, Fair Administrator, requesting a waiver of the permit fee for the addition to the museum at the Fairgrounds. After little discussion, the Board added approval to the consent agenda.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION UNDER ORS 192.660(1)(h) - PENDING LITIGATION:**

The Board recessed the regular session to go into Executive Session as allowed under ORS 192.660(1)(h). Upon coming out of Executive Session, Commissioner Hyde moved and Commissioner Bernhard seconded to ratify the mediation agreement between Lois & Freeman Ryder, individually and as trustees of Ryder Living Trust and Columbia County. The motion carried unanimously.

**BUILDING INSPECTOR II POSITION:**

Commissioner Hyde moved and Commissioner Bernhard seconded to authorize Todd Dugdale to fill the position of Building Inspector II. The motion carried unanimously.

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

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Dated at St. Helens, Oregon this 8<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2003.

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:   
Joe Corsiglia, Chair

By:   
Rita Bernhard, Commissioner

By:   
Anthony Hyde, Commissioner

By:   
Jan Greenhalgh, Board Secretary