

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA

SATURDAY

9:00 A.M.

APRIL 25, 2009

PRESENT:

David Humke, Chairman
Bonnie Weber, Vice Chairperson
John Breternitz, Commissioner
Bob Larkin, Commissioner
Kitty Jung, Commissioner

Amy Harvey, County Clerk
Katy Simon, County Manager
Melanie Foster, Legal Counsel

The Board convened at 9:06 a.m. in special session in the Commission Chambers, Washoe County Administration Complex, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada. Following the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of our Country, the Clerk called the roll and the Board conducted the following business:

09-390 AGENDA ITEM 3

Agenda Subject: “Public Comment. Comment heard under this item will be limited to two minutes per person and may pertain to matters both on and off the Commission agenda. The Commission will also hear public comment during individual action items, with comment limited to two minutes per person. Comments are to be made to the Commission as a whole.”

Jerry Purdy submitted a statement, which was placed on file with the Clerk. He suggested before reducing funds for schools, universities, health care, social services and public safety, taxes should be raised on companies who did not pay taxes. He indicated Nevada Mining made \$5.4 billion in 2007, but only paid \$30 million in taxes which equated to 0.5 percent. Mr. Purdy stated Nevada was the “promised land” for businesses because there was no corporate income tax, no taxes on corporate shares, no franchise tax, no personal income tax, no inventory tax, nominal annual business fees, low unemployment tax and a minimal employer payroll tax rate. He felt the tax system was unfair to certain citizens of the State and remarked the wealthiest pay 2 percent in taxes while the retired and disadvantaged pay 8.3 percent in taxes. Mr. Purdy also remarked the two-minute time limit for public comment was insufficient and impeded the chance for citizens to convey a message to the Board.

Ashley Wade suggested Golf Courses be cut rather than reducing other services important to the community. She stated decisions were being made for the budget, but real choices were being made that affected real people. Ms. Wade commented

several Libraries with low usage were open seven days a week and felt those funds would be better served in other departments.

Alice Ineson Gladwill spoke on the proposed closure of the Vya Maintenance Station. As a resident of that area, she felt it would be a great disservice to the citizens and would allow for many safety issues.

Michele Sheppard discussed County Parks. She said it was a shame that park facilities would be neglected due to the lack of rangers and personnel caused by budget reductions. Ms. Sheppard spoke on several regional parks and stated those parks were a vital resource for citizens.

09-391 AGENDA ITEM 4

Agenda Subject: “Discussion with citizens to receive input with regard to the Fiscal Year 2009/10 Budget. (All Commission Districts.)”

John Sherman, Finance Director, reviewed the Washoe County fiscal year 2009/10 budget. He said the economy and tax revenue base were undergoing a fundamental restructure. Mr. Sherman distributed current revenues compared to current expenses, which was placed on file with the Clerk. He said based on the most current economic data, estimates for the two major sources of revenue, property and consolidated tax, was now projected to decline in fiscal year 2009/10. Mr. Sherman stated with the continued erosion in the economic revenue base of the County and the changes in expenditures for fiscal year 2009/10, Washoe County projects to have a structural deficit next year of \$47 million.

Michele Sheppard asked why the regional parks could not be used as a revenue source. She said the fees raised could help with the maintenance of the facilities and add to County revenue. Ms. Sheppard stated parks were treasures and should be guarded and protected against damage that could potentially occur should there be reductions to staff.

Bill Fine asked if the Employee Association could increase their pay reduction possibly eliminating the lay-off of some employees.

Alice Ineson Gladwill spoke on the proposed reduction to close the Vya Maintenance Station. She stated the Ruby Pipeline was slated to go through the area and was concerned about the road if the Maintenance Station was closed. Ms. Gladwill asked how funds would be saved if the Maintenance Station closed in Vya, but a crew had to drive from Gerlach to grade the roads.

Ashley Wade inquired on the system management used to make the budget decisions and how the priorities for guiding the process were set.

Jennifer Bullock stated she was interested on ways to save library resources and suggested reducing the hours of smaller branches where the attendance was low. Ms. Bullock remarked libraries were founding institutions of public education.

Chairman Humke closed the public comment portion and stated the Commission would address some of the questions posed by the public.

Katy Simon, County Manager, explained there were User Fees for many services within the parks. She indicated each year the Regional Parks and Open Space Department conducted a review of User Fees and reviewed the market place for fees. She said those proposed fee changes were brought before the Board during a public meeting for adoption. Ms. Simon indicated to ensure that the fees were competitive this was an area under constant review.

Commissioner Weber asked if a public/private partnership had been reviewed for the Ruby Pipeline. Ms. Simon ensured an analysis would be completed and noted it was good strategy to have the private sector assist with projects that supported and enhanced their ability to operate. However, in regard to what could be required of the private sector concerning development projects, the County needed to stay within the law. Commissioner Weber stated that did not address specific concerns about the safety for the residents in Vya. Ms. Simon remarked that the Public Works Department needed to reduce their budget by \$8 million. She said it was a struggle to preserve the County's infrastructure and ensure safe passage for citizens. Ms. Simon said the business case had to be made for the greatest good for the greatest number.

Commissioner Weber found it interesting that longstanding County citizens who lived in rural communities with the least amount of population would be the most impacted. She hoped the undertaking would also include those rural communities reliant on County services.

Commissioner Jung agreed and noted citizens who paid taxes for years, but only use a small percentage of County resources also needed to be considered.

Commissioner Breternitz asked for an explanation on the system used to structure the budget cuts. Ms. Simon explained several years ago the County impaneled a group of citizens and elected officials to help identify the process and set priorities for spending reductions or investments. She said that process led to a prioritization system known as "Charting Our Course," and those priorities took into account statutory mandates and citizen preferences. Ms. Simon said the Board brought that process forward for the formation of the tier approach to budget reductions. She explained what percentages were associated with each tier level and added those tiers were applied to the \$47 million needed to be reduced from the budget. Ms. Simon said departments had been given target reduction percentages and, after the completion of departmental budget presentations, the Board would consider that information. She announced a public hearing on the budget was scheduled for May 18, 2009.

Commissioner Jung suggested additional media coverage was needed on how the County made budget decisions. Ms. Simon added a Budget Policy Committee was recently formed that included citizens, elected officials and appointed department heads who developed principles to guide the budget reduction process.

Commissioner Breternitz asked for clarification on how the Board and the Library Board of Trustees worked together. Ms. Simon remarked the Library system was funded by the County and was under the Board of County Commissioners for financial support; however, the Library Board of Trustees, appointed by the Board of County Commissioners, made administrative, operational and policy decisions concerning the Library system. She said the County Commissioners gave the Library their funding level and what funding appropriation should be reached, and then the Trustees decided how that money would be spent. She said in an order to maximize Library hours the Trustees had been active in reviewing low-usage time so not every library needed to be open seven days a week. Ms. Simon explained the District Board of Health had a similar scenario for County Government and were a Joint Powers Authority that had the authority to decide health operations for the County. She indicated those members were appointed by the County and the Cities of Reno and Sparks.

Commissioner Jung stated some temporary closures of libraries may need to occur to meet the proposed budget reductions and urged the Trustees to make those cuts based on usage patterns.

Chairman Humke said a Washoe County employee town hall meeting was held on April 24th. He said many employees raised interesting questions about management practices and reductions. He asked how those questions would be answered. Ms. Simon replied negotiations were continuing with the Employee Associations. She said, unlike the State, local governments in Nevada were required to have collective bargaining, and there were many subjects of that mandatory collective bargaining. Ms. Simon said there was a website for employees to post budget suggestions and added those questions were responded to quickly.

Ms. Sheppard asked if there was a way to post particular volunteer opportunities on the County's webpage.

Kathy Carter, Community Relations Director, reviewed the new online volunteer recruitment available on the County's webpage and highlighted the resources listed for citizen involvement. Commissioner Jung suggested the link for volunteer opportunities become more prominent on the webpage.

Ms. Simon reminded the public that the individual departmental budget presentations could be viewed on the County website.

Chairman Humke thanked the citizens for their input and comments.

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AGENDA ITEM 5 – ADJOURNMENT

10:06 a.m. There being no further business to come before the Board, on motion by Commissioner Weber, seconded by Commissioner Jung, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that the meeting be adjourned.

DAVID HUMKE, Chairman
Washoe County Commission

ATTEST:

AMY HARVEY, County Clerk
and Clerk of the Board of
County Commissioners

*Minutes Prepared by:
Stacy Gonzales, Deputy County Clerk*