

**Mason County Commission/Port of Shelton Commission Meeting**  
**Tuesday, October 16, 2012, 11:00 a.m.**  
**Commission Chambers, 411 North 5th Street, Shelton**

Mason County Commissioners Lynda Ring Erickson, Steve Bloomfield and Tim Sheldon and Port of Shelton Commissioners Jay Hupp, Dick Taylor and Tom Wallitner were in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by Chair Ring Erickson. The subject of the meeting was the fairgrounds.

Cmmr. Sheldon gave some history of the fairgrounds. He has talked to Senator Murray's office to weigh in on FAA, but has not heard back. He thanked Jay Hupp for his research on the fairgrounds.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson stated she understands that the Port of Shelton (POS) has been working on what to do with the fairgrounds. The POS has started the process of creating a county-wide citizen advisory group and she wanted to have a conversation about that. Cmmr. Ring Erickson gave the county's background of the fairgrounds. The county entered into a 50-year lease in 1963 with the POS for the property and understands that the lease cannot be extended or the property purchased. Forty acres has been considered for a future fairgrounds at the Public Works site. The County did an extensive study on possible options, had stakeholder meetings and obtained cost estimates for a new fairgrounds. In 2009, revenues started to fall and the County didn't have the money available to continue the fair and opted to discontinue the fair. At that time the POS leased the property and a regional county fair was held.

Cmmr. Bloomfield acknowledged the importance of the fair facilities to the community. The question is how we can retain this opportunity for the community. He attended the POS Commission meeting when it was decided to create a citizen committee to study the issue and he was taken aback when the POS decided to create a county-wide committee and wonders if the POS is over stepping their authority. He referred to an RCW that allows a port to establish a committee in the port district boundaries. He wants a workable, affordable plan.

Port of Shelton Chair Dick Taylor stated the lease for the fairgrounds property ends in 2013. There has to be a decision for what happens with that property. The POS have a letter from the FAA that states 13 years has been long enough to figure out what to do with that property. He believes the fair is a community issue and that's why they set up the county-wide citizen advisory committee. They have invited participants from across the county. They need to move ahead with the issue. The advisory committee has not met, the first meeting is scheduled for Thursday.

Cmmr. Sheldon suggested a joint Mason County/Port of Shelton citizen's committee.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson stated there are still two conversations - do we conserve the current fairgrounds location or move on to a new location?

Cmmr. Taylor stated the POS has voted to not conserve the current location.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson pointed out the county did form a committee and did a study. Do we resurrect the plan that the county funded and ask the citizen's committee to determine how to fund it. Or will the committee reinvent the wheel?

Cmmr. Taylor suggested the committee look at the plan, but can we afford it?

Cmmr. Wallitner emphasized that the FAA's issue stands. At the end of 2013, the fairgrounds as it exists, ends. The question is what can the county residents afford.

Cmmr. Jay Hupp stated he has a minority opinion on the POS Commission. He doesn't agree with the threat from FAA to end the lease. As a private citizen, he feels deeply on this subject and has personally written a letter to the Secretary of Transportation requesting a review the FAA decision.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson stated it seems reasonable to explore all options.

Cmmr. Sheldon believes those at the congressional level can make a difference and they have the ability to change the mind of the local federal officials.

It was noted the property at the Public Works site does have water and sewer infrastructure.

Cmmr. Sheldon asked if the FAA were to change their position, could the current fairgrounds continue.

Cmmr. Wallitner believes if the committee comes up with a viable plan, the FAA would continue the lease.

Cmmr. Taylor added if there were a certainty in a new fairgrounds, he believes the FAA position could change.

Cmmr. Bloomfield expressed frustration with the FAA. He stated the FAA is not the boss and likened them to a junior taxing district. He completely disagrees with knuckling under to the FAA.

Cmmr. Ring Erickson suggested a committee be appointed to examine financial options for long-term support of a county regional fair and ask they finish their recommendations for a financial strategy by the end of February 2013. There are several options, including sponsorship of buildings.

It was stressed that the key component is a long-term commitment.

Cmmr. Taylor stated that today, the Commissions need to reach agreement to create a committee to review funding options, look at plans, and alternatives.

Cmmr. Sheldon stressed that the plan needs to be realistic, consider the sizes of the events and consider what else is going on in the community. How likely is a ballot issue to pass?

Cmmr. Bloomfield stated it also needs to be determined who would manage the fairgrounds - Mason County or a private entity?

The County Commissioners agreed to place an item on their next Action Agenda creating an advisory committee to explore fairgrounds options.

Cmmr. Taylor stated they will brief the citizen group the POS has been working with.

Cmmr. Wallitner offered his opinion that if the fairgrounds had continued at the current location, he believes it would have lost money.

Cmmr. Hupp gave the history of fairgrounds and how it came to be and he believes the fairgrounds needs to survive.

The meeting adjourned at noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Zoren, Assistant to the County Commissioners

BOARD OF MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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Lynda Ring Erickson  
Chair

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Tim Sheldon  
Commissioner

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Steve Bloomfield  
Commissioner