

Kitsap County Citizens Budget Advisory Committee
Minutes
April 19, 2010

Committee Members Present: John Ahl, Chair; Robert Meadows; James Sommerhauser; Robert Gelder; Robert Lamb; Jeff Pfof; Steve Maxim; Patricia Hennessy; Chris Lemke; and Shannon Childs

Absent: Jo Schumacher and Kitty Candelaria

Commissioners Present: Steve Bauer, Josh Brown, and Charlotte Garrido
Staff Present: Nancy Buonanno Grennan and Stephanie Pinard.

Chair Ahl called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM.

Minutes of the April 5, 2010 were approved on Mr. Maxim's motion.

Announcements: Stephanie reminded everyone of the Volunteer Appreciation Event tomorrow at the Kitsap County Fairgrounds, Presidents Hall 5:30 to 7pm.

Chair Ahl turned the floor over to the commissioners.

Each commissioner spoke to the committee, thanking us for taking on a Herculean effort, and stated that the Interim Report guided many decisions. There is a great deal left to work on in the report; but unfortunately, short staffing at the county has made much of that work impossible. The staffing issue has also impacted the ability for the committee and board to collaborate effectively. It was suggested that the committee take a pause, while the county works on getting the budget process ramped up for 2011. When staffed up again, the board would like to reconstitute the committee and get back into issues facing the county, such as annexations and incorporations.

They commended Stephanie and Nancy for their efforts in support of the committee.

Committee members provided feedback:

Mr. Lemke stated his support of taking a recess, with terms expiring and several senior committee members leaving the board, newer members are at the disadvantage of having less experience. He suggested staggering terms in the future. He also stated that it is easy for government to get big, and hard to get small. As the economy turns and revenues increase, he hopes the county has a plan that allows for right sizing to mission critical staffing, and not to grow too extensively. Kitsap County Public Health Department's budget is a good template going forward, showing what they do, what is core and what is not, and the cost.

Ms. Hennessy expressed the desire to stay in touch and requested that they contact us for feedback.

Mr. Lamb agreed that the committee is a load stone on Stephanie, and said that our recommendations are progressive, but the county does not have the time for them.

Mrs. Childs stated that she would like to provide some sort of summary of our recent work to the commissioners. She reminded that tough economic times, though painful, provide opportunities to step back and rethink the ways things are being done. Challenge why we do them a certain way, and ask why not do something differently, in order to gain greater efficiencies.

Mr. Sommerhauser said that he believes we had an impact—that questions we asked became dialogue at budget meetings; and changes in conversation and thinking have taken place because of our input. Performance metrics were not discussed previously, but now is an active item in the budgeting process. If the committee is reconstituted, he recommends stronger, clearer guidance from the Board and let departments know what purpose we serve for the Board.

Mr. Gelder suggested that the future committee be used as a think tank that would take on a particular topic at a time, and focus on end products and deliverables.

Mr. Maxim said that short staffing may not be a good reason to stop getting input. Staffing may be a problem today, and perhaps it won't be tomorrow. But maybe it won't improve tomorrow. He said you shouldn't stop good work and take a break.

Commissioner Brown stated that it is the big strategic issues where there is not time. The analysis of what constitutes regional services versus local role was something he thought we would have accomplished. Designing a true program budget with performance measures—all these things are important and take tremendous time.

Commissioner Garrido would like our information logged for the future. She likes performance measures for each department. She agreed that the think tank format may be the way to work going forward.

Chair Ahl stated that the questions prepared for Law and Justice may provide our train of thought and direction, and suggested that they be provided to the Board for their information. The Sheriff received questions; but other Law and Justice questions were not forwarded yet. If the committee is reconstituted at some future date, he suggested that the board staff up and establish staggered terms. New members deserve training, clear guidance in getting off on the right steps. He thought we suffered from the “Rodney Dangerfield effect”, and encouraged that departments be introduced and advised of the committee's role. He recommended more citizen input to the budget in open meetings and hearings, workshops in the community. He recommended reaching out to groups such as the League of Women Voters and political parties to help set up Citizen budget forums. Mr. Lamb added that they could go to community groups such as Rotary

and Kiwanis and ask them to designate a representative to serve; and take information back to their respective groups.

Chair Ahl encouraged consolidation. Kitsap County has a quarter million population—the size of a modest city. Consolidation opportunities abound. He encouraged the Board to keep pulling on the regional services string.

He gave high praise to Stephanie Pinard for her excellent efforts in working with the committee; and he said he was honored to work with this fine group of committee members.

Mr. Pfost urged that the Board focus on getting resources in order to support a committee, evaluate the group and how it functions, consider the team size—you may get better performance with smaller team structure. Clear goals, buy in, go forward on one or two issues at a time.

It was suggested that the committee members send our budget suggestions to Stephanie by the end of the month, five to six major topics maximum. Jan Koske will send an exit interview questionnaire.

Adjourned 6:10 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Shannon Childs