



BOARD OF YAKIMA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Regular Meeting

Work Session

Monday, April 17, 2023, at 9:00 am

BOCC Conference Room, Room 232, 128 N 2nd Street, Yakima, WA 98901 or Zoom

4/17/2023 - Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting Called to Order at 9:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Chair LaDon Linde, Commissioner Amanda McKinney, Commissioner Kyle Curtis, Legal Counsel Stefanie Weigand, Clerk of the Board Julie Lawrence, Deputy Clerk of the Board Erin Franklin, County Prosecutor Joe Brusic, Public Services Director Lisa Freund, Planning Official Thomas "Tommy" Carroll, Long Range Planner Phil Hoge, Human Resources Director Jacqui Lindsay, and guests.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

No Public Comment Received.

3. PROSECUTOR (15 Minutes)

Joe Brusic approached the Board with an out-of-policy hiring request. He asked for a pay exception to hire an attorney from the Department of Assigned Counsel who would like to become a felony prosecutor. This attorney is also being recruited by the Franklin County Prosecutor's Office, which is the reason for Mr. Brusic's request to hire him at an Attorney 2 level. This individual would work in the Sexual Assault Unit, a position that has proved difficult to fill; he also has experience with DAC as both a legal investigator and an attorney, but not enough experience to qualify for Attorney 2. In response to Commissioner Curtis' request, Mr. Brusic clarified that the employee in question would return the recent hiring bonus he received from DAC, and instead receive the hiring bonus from the Prosecutor's Office. The Commissioners approved this request, citing the need to retain quality staff and fill open positions.

4. STRUCTURE OF WORK SESSIONS, DIRECT REPORT UPDATES, AND DEPARTMENT KPI'S (45 Minutes) - Commissioner Curtis

Commissioner Curtis asked to strike this item from the Work Session agenda, as he is not yet ready to present.

5. PUBLIC SERVICES (30 Minutes)

Tommy Carroll presented an Urban Growth Area expansion request from the City of Sunnyside: the City would like the County's Planning Division to process an emergency Comprehensive Plan amendment. A 5-year contract with a solar company for use of a particular plot of land will end in August, and the City has been approached by developers for use of that land instead. The City would like to move the solar farm to another portion of land, incorporate it into the UGA, and annex it. Tommy noted that there are many rules around expanding the UGA, and the County has to ensure that it meets the Growth Management Act's requirement and the Voluntary Stewardship Program's requirements. Unfortunately, with an August deadline, County staff would struggle to evaluate this request in time. They would need to create a staff report, which would then go to the Planning Commission for a hearing. Then staff would schedule a Work Session with the Board, followed by a hearing. The appeal period after the Board's decision would actually still run beyond the August deadline, which could drag the process out even further. In addition, due to staffing issues, Planning staff would have to be pulled away from other County priorities, including updates to County Code regarding agritourism, accessory dwelling units, solar facilities, YCWRS, etc. Commissioner McKinney pointed out that this seems counterproductive to the County's goals, especially considering the request involves a solar facility. Lisa Freund also noted that the Planning Division is already working hard just to try to keep up permit requests.

In response to Commissioner Curtis' question, Tommy noted that the County's solar moratorium only extends to unincorporated areas, not areas within city limits. He also acknowledged that the solar company could pay the \$50,000 fee to go through EFSEC for siting instead, but he believes this is unlikely since the solar company already has a relationship with the City. Since the County already has to update its Comprehensive Plan and Critical Areas by 2026, that process (and the process of updating all 14 UGA's) will begin as soon as 2024, during which time the City could request a non-emergency amendment, and the County would have the required time to process that request. If the City could work out a contract extension with the solar company (which Phil Hoge stated the City had not previously been interested in), they could get their UGA updated at that time.

The Board considered the many aspects of this issue, including private property rights, solar facility siting concerns, use of ag land that has been unused/unproductive for quite some time but could be used for agricultural purposes in the future, etc. Ultimately, Commissioners McKinney and Curtis cited concerns about staff bandwidth as a main reason for denying the request; other County priorities would be delayed, with no guarantee that this amendment could even be processed to completion by the deadline. Commissioner Curtis requested that Tommy include this reasoning in his letter to the City, with the suggestion that they reach out to Commissioner Linde to discuss the possibility of alternate solutions. Commissioner Linde stated that he would be amenable to this, as he is not ready to close the door on future consideration but is also concerned about staff bandwidth and the short deadline. The Commissioners asked Tommy to forward a draft letter for the Board's review before sending it to the City and thanked the Planning Division for all their hard work.

6. OPEN LETTER FROM YAKIMA VALLEY LANDLORDS ASSOCIATION (15 Minutes) - Commissioner Curtis

Commissioner Curtis mentioned a letter sent by the Yakima Valley Landlords Association to the Yakima City Council, of which the BOCC also received a copy. Commissioners McKinney and Linde confirmed that they had reached out separately to respond to concerns, most of which were directed at policies from the Governor's Office and the State. Commissioner McKinney plans to attend YVLA's next meeting. Regarding concerns about federal rental assistance running out, Commissioners Linde and McKinney confirmed that Human Services Director Esther Magasis is already looking into other grant funding opportunities to help bridge the gap. County funds cannot be utilized for assistance – only pass-through funding.

7. 2023 PUBLIC SERVICES RECOGNITION WEEK DRAFTED LETTER (15 Minutes) - Commissioner Curtis

In observance of the 2023 Public Services Recognition Week, Commissioner Curtis presented ideas for recognizing County employees. One idea was to give department heads and elected officials the opportunity to nominate 1-2 employees from their departments for the Extra Mile Award. The Board would then select 5 of these employees to honor at an upcoming Agenda. Commissioner Curtis shared a proposed budget for awards for these individuals, plus food and beverages honoring County employees, all of which would come from community donations. He also shared a proposed budget (based on guidelines and information provided by Financial Services) for highlighting the selected employees and advertising County jobs in the Yakima Herald, the Business Times, and a radio ad, as a way to show that the County offers an excellent career path. Human Resources would also send out emails County-wide with a message from the Board, a proclamation regarding the 2023 Public Services Recognition Week, the names of the selected employees, and a note about Seattle Mariners tickets available to public employees at a discounted rate as part of a promotional night.

Commissioners McKinney and Linde expressed support for these ideas, but asked for more information about advertising costs. Jacqui Lindsay added that based on HR's 2022 Workforce Data Report, advertising in the Yakima Herald has not traditionally yielded many job applicants, so this method of recruitment may not be the best use of funds. Jacqui also noted that the Health District and the Office of Emergency Management are not actually County employees, and therefore could be removed from Commissioner Curtis' department nomination list. The Board directed Julie Lawrence to send out an email with the BOCC letter and the employee nomination form to the appropriate staff.

8. COMMISSIONER UPDATES/ GENERAL DISCUSSION

The Commissioners gave updates on individual committee/board assignments for the week of April 10, 2023-April 14, 2023.

9. NEW BUSINESS

No New Business.

10. ADJOURN

Commissioner Curtis MOTION: To Adjourn

Commissioner McKinney SECOND

Motion Passes to Adjourn. Meeting Adjourned at 10:19 a.m.

All work sessions are recorded and will be available to view on the BOCC website at <https://www.yakimacounty.us/AgendaCenter/Board-of-Commissioners-2>.

APPROVED DATE APR 25 2023
DATE/Minutes

BOARD OF YAKIMA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

LaDon Linde, Chair

Amanda McKinney, Commissioner

Kyle Curtis, Commissioner

*Constituting the Board of County Commissioners
for Yakima County, Washington*

