

**COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES
KITITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON
COMMISSIONERS AUDITORIUM
SPECIAL MEETING**

WEDNESDAY

10:30 A.M.

FEBRUARY 5, 2020

Board members present: Commissioner Brett Wachsmith; Commissioner Laura Osiadacz; and Commissioner Cory Wright.

Others: Julie Kjorsvik, Clerk of the Board; Candi Blackford, Chief Administrator; Kasey Knutson, Special Programs Coordinator; Steve Panattoni, Jail Superintendent; Ed Buntin, Corrections Lieutenant; Katrina Mankus, Juvenile Court Administrator; Superior Court Judge Scott Sparks, Mark Larson, Public Health Official; and approximately 40 members of the public.

SPECIAL MEETING MENTAL/BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TAX PROPOSAL COMMISSIONERS

At 2:00 p.m. Chairman Wachsmith opened a Special Meeting to receive a presentation regarding a Mental Health/Behavioral Health Tax proposal.

Dr. Kevin Martin, Chief Medical Officer at Kittitas Valley Hospital reviewed information for the need of an increase in Sales & Use Tax for additional resources relating to Mental Health within Kittitas County. He explained the benefits that would be seen in the community if the tax was approved.

Dr. Mark Larson, Kittitas County Public Health Officer provided data obtained from the Community Health Assessment and felt there was good community support to increase the sales and use tax. Diana Rossow, CPWI Coalition Coordinator spoke in favor of the proposal and urged the Boards support. Superior Court Judge Scott Sparks felt there was a significant need for programs and due to his experience in dealing with a certain segment of the community and how he has observed them work for those in need.

Andres Bowman, concerned citizen, spoke in favor of the tax. He addressed how mental health issues have been on the rise and have impacted many families in the community. David Douglas explained how there are a lot of people who have substance use disorders and mental health issues who need resources in our community that are not currently available. Sue Gunn, a Counselor at Compressive Health Care commented on the mental health and behavioral health crisis that's currently going on in schools and even with full time clinicians, they are still not able to meet the needs of our community.

APPROVED
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Joy Stochosky, Community Mental Health Counselor, said our community is a great place to raise family, but there is a significant need for more mental health services. She encouraged the Board to approve the proposed tax for increased access. Michelle Cawley, Community Health Nurse, said our community needed additional funding to provide the necessary resources for citizens to access and urged the Board to approve an increase in sales tax for mental health services. Kersten Weeks shared personal experiences and encouraged the Board to approve an increase in sales tax. Greg Abul, Director of Comprehensive Healthcare said he fully understands the unmet needs for access to mental health and provided examples of those needs within our County. Lauren O'Connell, Kittitas Valley Healthcare reviewed the need for additional resources in the community. Steve Panattoni, Jail Superintendent spoke of his experience seeing the mental health issues from working in law enforcement in both corrections and the line. Rich Elliott urged the Board to make an investment for leverage and felt by doing so it will be paid back.

Chairman Wachsmith said he would like the Public Health Staff to schedule a Public Hearing on the February 18th Agenda, to be held on March 3, 2020. The Board of County Commissioners expressed their appreciation to everyone who attended the Special Meeting.

Commissioner Wright felt it was extremely important for the public to know what the exact benefits would be as a result from an increase in Sales Tax. He felt it was important to reach out to everyone with costs that are being seen resulting from Mental Health issues in our community. He said he would provide conditional support, but with a performance period, such as including an end date (5 years) to track data and ensure it is working. He encouraged everyone to take the message out to a broader array of people.


Commissioner Osiadacz said she was encouraged by Commissioner Wrights statements and appreciated all the information that was provided throughout the meeting. She said she believes there would be a positive effect on the community but wants to make sure it is done correctly from the beginning. She agreed that a timeline would be good to have to ensure things are working. She felt it was important to communicate what is being proposed to everyone in the community so they know where their tax dollars would be going if an increase in Sales Tax were to be approved.

Meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

CLERK OF THE BOARD


Julie Kjorsvik

KITTITAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON


Brett Wachsmith, Chairman