

MINUTES & NOTICE OF BOARD ACTION

BOOK 153 PAGE 1794

APPROVED October 27, 1993



LANE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

This document, upon approval in a public meeting by the Board of County Commissioners, serves as official minutes of such meetings as required under the Open Meetings Law, ORS 192.650.

Pursuant to notice made by mailing agendas to news media, a selected list of jurisdictions and individuals in Lane County, a meeting of the Board of County Commissioners was held.

Questions should be directed to The Board Office Specialist 3, ext. 4203.

September 22, 1993
1:30 p.m.

SENATE DISTRICT 20 INTERVIEWS
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioners'
Conference Room

Chair Steve Cornacchia presided with Ellie Dumdi, Jack Roberts and Jerry Rust present. Marie Frazier excused. Sharon Giles, Recording Secretary.

Cornacchia welcomed the three candidates and interested parties. He reviewed the process as outlined on the agenda.

CANDIDATE PRESENTATIONS

MICHAEL GRAHAM introduced himself, noting that he was a native Eugenic and a 40-year plus resident of Lane County. He stated that an opportunity to serve as a state senator gives him a chance to give back to the area. Graham commented that he has no experience as an elected official, but served as chair of the Lane County Democratic Party for 1991 and 1992 and has been involved in student government and various school parent groups. He indicated that he has experience in negotiation, budgeting and land use planning. Graham stressed that he was capable of making difficult choices. He commented that he has no intention of a political career.

PETER SORENSON introduced himself, stating that his reasons for seeking the office were 1) he is familiar with Oregon issues; 2) he has experience; and 3) he has local government experience. He stated that he had experience running his own business for 11 years. Sorenson cited government experience working in the U.S. House of Representatives and for the Secretary of Agriculture working with Oregon issues. He explained to the Board that his election to the Budget Committee and the Board of Lane Community College, dealing with a \$50 million per year budget, has given him local government experience. Sorenson concluded that his background, experience, judgment and ability to get along with people justify his appointment to fill this seat.

JOHN MCFADDEN introduced himself, indicating that he became involved in this process because he sees a need for a higher level of communication within the state legislature. He stated that his greatest strength is his ability to

communicate, while minimizing political posturing. McFadden stressed that he looks for consensus. He remarked that he has no previous government experience. McFadden noted the need to continue the style of maintaining communication and working to come up with solutions.

CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS

Questions posed to PETER SORENSON:

Q: RUST asked the candidate what he knows about the property tax system in Oregon - how it is administered locally and how it is funded. He asked Sorenson if he thinks the administration of the system is fair and equitable.

A: SORENSON noted that there is always room for improvement and his area of concern would be who pays for the collection of taxes and the method of assessment. He indicated that having current assessments is necessary. Sorenson stated he would like to evaluate and investigate the possibility of having all jurisdictions for whom taxes are collected pay a portion of the collection costs.

Q: CORNACCHIA asked the candidate to discuss his understanding of Lane County's financial condition and talk about what he sees as help coming from the legislature to deal with that.

A: SORENSON stated that his opinion is that local government has been ill-treated by the legislative assembly in recent years because the members have not had as much contact with local government as they should. He indicated that he opposes mandates without follow-up funding. Sorenson observed that the "Payments in Lieu of Taxes Act" has a tremendous impact on counties.

Q: DUMDI asked the candidate if he thinks Ballot Measure 1 is a viable way to solve part of the school financing problem.

A: SORENSON replied that it was hard to be critical and that he would have voted to refer this to the voters. He stated that fixing the funding for public education would be good; however, it does not address other crucial issues such as local government services and other state funding issues such as higher education. Sorenson indicated he was initially leaning against the measure, but that something may be better than nothing.

ROBERTS expressed concern about the process being used in these interviews, noting that all of the questions are being asked of one candidate first, allowing the others to have an advantage in having time to formulate answers. Roberts indicated he preferred a system where all candidates respond to one question before another is asked.

Q: ROBERTS asked the candidate to identify his top three priorities in the state senate.

A: SORENSON responded education, tax reform and being appointed to an interim committee.

RUST and CORNACCHIA deferred on the next round of questioning.

Q: DUMDI asked for the candidate's thoughts on some alternative funding for state problems.

A: SORENSON indicated that he was interested in the concept of a seasonal gas tax, in a gross receipts tax (although he observed that there was a problem regarding the impact on small business), and in user fees. He commented that he was open to listening to the public and that there are no easy answers.

Q: ROBERTS noted that the Governor vetoed HB 2883 and he asked the candidate if he would vote to override the veto if there is a special session.

A: SORENSON stated that he was uncomfortable with being asked exactly what he would do as a senator. He commented that he had read the veto message which explained that one reason for the veto was to provide the opportunity for local government to have the ability to impose a real estate transfer tax. Sorenson indicated that, in general, he would vote to sustain the veto.

Q: CORNACCHIA referred to HB 3661 involving land use and asked the candidate what he thinks of it and if he sees additional changes necessary for the state of Oregon.

A: SORENSON replied that he understands the legislation is intended to alleviate some of the problems created by the Land Conservation and Development Act, LCDC and the LC&D Department, namely their effort to regulate land use. He stated that there needs to be leeway for local governments to allow residential development, in particular, on secondary agricultural and secondary forest lands. Sorenson commented that he wants to see the practical effects of the legislation.

DUMDI deferred on this round of questioning.

Q: ROBERTS asked the candidate if he would describe himself as "bullish" or "bearish" with regard to the future of Oregon.

A: SORENSON replied that democrats don't use those terms as often as other people; however, he indicated that he is quite optimistic about the future.

Questions posed to JOHN MCFADDEN:

Q: RUST asked the candidate what he knows about the property tax system in Oregon - how it is administered locally and how it is funded. He asked McFadden if he thinks the administration of the system is fair and equitable.

A: MCFADDEN stated that, from an administrative standpoint, it has worked reasonably well so far. He noted that there is some unfairness in expecting the county to cover the costs of collection for other governmental units. McFadden expressed concern that properties are not assessed as frequently as the law requires.

Q: CORNACCHIA asked the candidate to discuss his understanding of Lane County's financial condition and talk about what he sees as help coming from the legislature to deal with that.

A: MCFADDEN replied that if the sales tax passes, Lane County's financial condition is not going to improve, as it was his understanding that personal property taxes on equipment/machinery, amounting to \$250 million annually, would be removed from the tax rolls and sales taxes would be paid on the equipment instead. He suggested that the legislature could become involved in the issue of counties being underpaid on O & C lands because of lumber being scaled incorrectly.

Q: DUMDI asked the candidate if he thinks Ballot Measure 1 is a viable way to solve part of the school financing problem and what alternative funding he might support.

A: MCFADDEN indicated that he does not expect the measure to be successful. He stressed the importance of funding education as it is our future. He stated he was strongly in favor of state general fund priorities for funding education, corrections and human resources before anything else. McFadden commented he would look at the possibility of corporate taxes, restructuring of the state income tax and a gross receipts tax.

Q: ROBERTS asked the candidate to identify his top three priorities in the state senate.

A: MCFADDEN responded that education would be first, then human resources and corrections. He acknowledged a personal affinity for working with the homeless.

Q: ROBERTS noted that the Governor vetoed HB 2883 and he asked the candidate if he would vote to override the veto if there is a special session.

A: MCFADDEN replied that he would not vote to override the veto, stating that a real estate transfer tax would be more appropriate at the local level for local needs.

Q: CORNACCHIA referred to HB 3661 involving land use and asked the candidate what he thinks of it and if he sees additional changes necessary for the state of Oregon.

A: MCFADDEN cited the need for long range land use goals and more autonomy at the county level, as LCDC was too complex. He noted the need to protect primary lands, emphasizing the need for more flexibility on secondary lands.

Q: DUMDI asked the candidate to cite any possible revenue solutions for local governments other than the real estate transfer tax.

A: MCFADDEN stressed the need for the state to provide funds for any mandates they produce.

Q: ROBERTS asked the candidate if he would describe himself as "bullish" or "bearish" with regard to the future of Oregon.

A: MCFADDEN stated that he was probably more bullish than bearish, commenting that "government governs best which governs least".

Q: CORNACCHIA asked the candidate to elaborate regarding his priority for education.

A: MCFADDEN stressed the need for more cultural understanding and tolerance. He stated the solution to problems is not always "throwing money at them". McFadden suggested an emphasis on inventive solutions that don't necessarily cost money.

Questions posed to MICHAEL GRAHAM:

Q: RUST asked the candidate what he knows about the property tax system in Oregon - how it is administered locally and how it is funded. He asked Graham if he thinks the administration of the system is fair and equitable.

A: GRAHAM noted that the property tax system is an example of a mandate without funding. He indicated that he was against Ballot Measure 5.

Q: CORNACCHIA asked the candidate to discuss his understanding of Lane County's financial condition and talk about what he sees as help from the Legislature to deal with that.

A: GRAHAM responded that the County's financial picture is not positive because of declining O & C revenues. He observed that one of his objections to the sales tax issue is that it forbids the levying of local sales taxes. Graham noted that he backed the split roll tax measure and might support a gross receipts tax.

Q: DUMDI, noting that the candidate had already expressed his opinion of Ballot Measure 1, asked for specific ideas on how best to provide education.

A: GRAHAM stated that public education has to be a priority. He stressed that preventive things need to be done with children, as early as the pre-kindergarten level, and that intervention needs to be done effectively.

Q: ROBERTS asked the candidate to identify his top three priorities in the state senate.

A: GRAHAM indicated his priorities would be the funding of public education, concerns regarding campaign financing/special interests, and land use issues and their impact on the environment.

Q: CORNACCHIA referred to HB 3661 involving land use and asked the candidate what he thinks of it and if he sees additional changes necessary for the state of Oregon.

A: GRAHAM responded that he is in favor of in-filling in cities and urban growth areas to solve housing problems. He commented that individual rights to develop property need to be within the general focus of the greater good for society.

Q: ROBERTS noted that the Governor vetoed HB 2883 and he asked the candidate if he would vote to override the veto if there is a special session.

A: GRAHAM replied that he would not vote to override the veto.

Q: ROBERTS asked the candidate if he would describe himself as "bullish" or "bearish" with regard to the future of Oregon.

A: GRAHAM stated that he sees the need to make difficult choices with a mind for the future.

CONCLUDING STATEMENTS BY CANDIDATES

JOHN MCFADDEN explained that his greatest strength is his ability to work with a variety of people. He indicated that he has no enemies, just political adversaries. McFadden emphasized the need to look for areas which people have in common since everyone seems to have a willingness to look for a solution. He stressed the need to focus on keeping lines of communication open and not have political posturing. McFadden stated that he see both sides of the management/labor equation. He cited the advice of Grattan Kerans and asked the Commissioners for their votes.

MICHAEL GRAHAM noted that this is a tremendous opportunity and recognized that the majority of the Commissioners probably differ with him politically. He mentioned the need to develop a bi-partisan spirit and a sense of cooperation. Graham stated that he welcomes the opportunity to address the state issues and would go in with an open mind. He stressed that he intends to bring the best representation for all of the people in the state as well as District 20. Graham cited the need for a constructive, cooperative attitude to help forge compromises.

PETER SORENSON thanked the Board for this opportunity and expressed his appreciation to many people in county government for providing him with information. He stated that he would be an advocate for the people and concerns in District 20, noting that jobs, economic diversification and education are among the issues. Sorenson indicated that he has a demonstrated commitment to Oregon's system of government. He remarked that it is a hallmark of Oregon government that we try to pick the best person for the job and he stated he is the best person for the job.

The meeting recessed at 2:45 p.m. and reconvened at 2:55 p.m.

DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION

Rust commented that there are three good candidates. He noted that all three candidates had responded similarly regarding the need for a more equitable way of paying for the property tax system. Rust stated that he appreciated the emphasis on education. He indicated that he liked Graham's passion and he liked McFadden's experience; but he would vote for Sorenson as he was a little more ready, a little more informed, has a broader background and was the most sympathetic and knowledgeable about local government.

Dumdi agreed that there were three good candidates. She stated that in looking at the experience and in listening to the responses, she was casting her vote for Sorenson as he is the person who has the best background at this particular time and has had the most experience.

Roberts commended the candidates and stated that he respected them for their willingness to become candidates. He noted that this is the fourth appointment to the state legislature that the Board has done in the last two years. He commented that each time three white males were brought forward for interviews. Roberts observed the need to work for diversity and inclusiveness in the political process. He expressed his disappointment that Henry Luvert, Larry Perry and Bob Trimble were not included in the list, which could have included five names. Noting that he was trying to choose the person who best fit the District, he agreed that the most qualified person is Sorenson.

Cornacchia indicated that he would make the vote unanimous. He mentioned that sympathy for local government was a big consideration. Cornacchia stated that Sorenson has the best knowledge base and the best defined "political compass". He commented that he was most comfortable with Sorenson's specificity.

MOTION: To unanimously cast ballots for Peter Sorenson, naming him to be the next senator for District 20. Rust MOVED, Dumdi SECONDED. VOTE: 4-0.

Sorenson expressed his appreciation for the Board's confidence in appointing him and for the opportunity to serve.

There being no further business, this meeting adjourned at 3:06 p.m.



Sharon Giles
Recording Secretary