

MINUTES & NOTICE OF BOARD ACTION

BOOK 156 PAGE 2012

APPROVED

Feb. 7, 1995

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.

December 21, 1994
3:00 p.m.

ELECTED OFFICIALS MEETING

Commissioners'
Conference Room

Present: Chair Jerry Rust, Commissioner Jack Roberts, Commissioner Steve Cornacchia, Commissioner Ellie Dumdi, Commissioner Marie Frazier. Also present were Commissioner-Elect Cindy Weeldreyer and Commissioner-Appointee Bobby Green.

Staff present: Bill Van Vactor, Teresa Wilson, Jim Gangle, Bob McManus, Doug Harclerod, and Jerry Pierce, Recording Secretary

Others Present: Joe Moseley; Jerry Moskis, President Lane Community College.

Weeldreyer explained the purpose of the meeting and said since it did not involve the full leadership team, it was intended as an informal discussion of options only. She said the desired outcome was a consensus among elected officials on a process to be used in the short-term to meet the deficit the County was facing. She stated if the County was going to consider asking for new revenue, there will be many challenges. She asked for input about those challenges.

Some of the suggested prevailing public perceptions and attitudes included:

"Property taxes are too high. County employees are overpaid. Government is inefficient. Anti-government in general. If government spent their money more efficiently, there would be enough money. Government should cut out duplication, operate more efficiently. Generally, the money government has is not being spent well. Over-regulation, often with land use issues. Two distinct impressions; 1) government isn't doing what it should do efficiently, and 2) government is wasting money on things it should not be doing in the first place. Apathy. What's in it for me?"

Sheriff McManus emphasized a positive view and said he had received many letters of thanks from people for putting value back into the community.

There was discussion on the general lack of knowledge and understanding of the complexity of government services and overlapping jurisdictions.

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Commissioner Roberts observed that it will help County government if it is responsive to the public by focusing on law enforcement and the heightened interest and concern on issues involving children.

Weeldreyer presented suggested short- and long-term approaches to determine the course that Lane County is to take. She talked about nationwide emphasis placed on involving the community in public processes and suggested providing invitations to broad sections of representative groups for a four-hour, well-facilitated meeting, hosted by elected officials, in mid- to late-January. She said the goal of the meeting would be getting input on developing a strategic plan, balancing the budget, and prioritizing County programs. She suggested early January for the leadership team to meet and develop an internal list of some strategic directions or guiding principles related to the County's mission statement.

Weeldreyer discussed how Lane Community College had arrived at guiding principles and from those, put together criteria to start their budget process for that year. She suggested adding a community overlay to what the County is currently doing. She stated that mandated services would be part of the principles to be provided to the community participants.

Harclerod questioned her proposal to "prioritize County programs and to balance the 95/96 budget" in a four-hour meeting, since it had taken painstaking months to accomplish this in previous years.

Weeldreyer replied that her suggestion included having each department provide a brief summary of functions and current budget as part of the advance material. Following that would be an additional meeting with a professional facilitator to arrive at what the County would derive from this meeting, recommendations, and how to get there.

Commissioner Cornacchia asked where the Board's commitment to the product from this meeting would fit. He expressed concern that her suggestion was for the people attending that meeting to prioritize County programs and develop a plan for County government. He said his experience has been that a group of people with limited and vested interests would attend and represent views from a very small portion of the community. He said he would find it difficult to commit to that product. Cornacchia discussed the differences between Lane Community College (LCC) and Lane County government in scope of services, size of population, personal contact with programs and services, and other factors.

Weeldreyer said she did not expect that one community meeting would develop a strategic plan but she was suggesting gathering the general public together to have input on the front end of the budget process. She said a long-term possible solution would be to spend July and August gathering as much community input as possible. She said she was personally willing to commit to this and was hoping for a long-term strategy. She stated, based on this information, the County would have an evaluation component. Weeldreyer said her highest hope would be to give the public an opportunity to get involved in the process in a greater way.

There was a discussion on how to get a fully representational group of constituencies rather than special-interest representatives.

Commissioner Rust said there was educational value in what was being proposed, but what was needed was to focus on the short term crisis. He said the County budget is the result of an evolutionary tightening of scarce resources and that giving the process a community overlay was good, but the budget process was very political and in the end the five Commissioners and the budget committee represent almost 300,000 people. Rust addressed the interest in enhancing police, youth services, the district attorney and law enforcement services and the possibility of a differentiated tax. Rust said the County needs to go through the budget process and lay out \$2.5 million in cuts, because if nothing happens, those cuts will have to be made. He suggested that in the meantime, the County should put up a levy and deliver the County's message. Rust said he believed the County should have community meetings but it's not realistic to do a four-hour meeting and prioritize programs, balance the budget and develop a strategic plan. Continuing, he said that the bottom line is that the Commissioners are responsible to do those three things, and they must be done promptly so that a proposal is on the table for the people of this county.

Commissioner Cornacchia said he was very interested in having public input, but the County needed to have its expectations and the public's expectations set well in advance of any meetings.

Weeldreyer said that if the County had a set of rules or principles tied into the County mission statement, there would be a better chance of overcoming all of the political overlays that occur in this process.

Commissioner Cornacchia stated that the County went through a huge program and process and a prioritization, but didn't adhere to it.

Weeldreyer replied that it could be done because she'd done it at LCC by committing to a set of principles determined in partnership with a group of people who would be affected.

Commissioner Roberts said he felt that the County does fund according to priorities. He felt the bigger problem was the difference between the Commissioners who live this every day and the interest groups who are directly affected. He asked Commissioner-Elect Green to share his perceptions from the Eugene Decision process.

Green said he felt people come to those meetings with a set of expectations, lack of knowledge and incorrect assumptions. For example, he said, people are not aware of repercussions of some cuts that appear to be simple. He added another issue was willingness to live with the choices. He stated there was value in the process by getting a compilation of facts and shaping that information into what the Board could commit to. He said another issue is discipline of the group--once the information is received from the public, it has to be adhered to. He noted that his experience had been that once the budget process is over, it's a free-for-all.

Weeldreyer stated that one of the underlying goals in utilizing a strategic budget plan based on the mission statement is that when constituents come in and say, "Cut their program, but not mine," it is possible to defend decisions based on a set of agreements that all have committed to; thus, the political overlay would be lessened.

Commissioner Rust stated that the Commissioners have as good an idea as anybody about what their constituents want and that he didn't want to send a message that all that has to be done is prioritize correctly to solve the financial problem. He said the County needs to get the message out that this is a crisis for a local government that provides a fairly narrow range of critical services. Rust then discussed the differentiated tax issue and the room tax fund, declaring that those are issues that need to be discussed now.

Weeldreyer asked if there was support to continue researching this process. She stated that Lane County doesn't have any accountability or evaluation component, and she was trying to put together a model that provides some consistency for long-range planning.

Harclerod said he was interested in this kind of a process because the way it works now is that, as a practical matter, the County Administrator makes the budget.

Commissioner Roberts said the real issue is that just because law enforcement is the top priority for the County does not mean it should get everything it thinks it needs. He added that the County should get involved and question it, and not fund every one of those programs before anything else. Roberts stated every program needs to be viewed as a stream of priorities and the last priority for the sheriff's department is not necessarily more important than the last priority in every other department. Continuing, he said rather than the Board disengaging from that process, it needs to monitor those who are funding and administering the programs to make sure the public is getting the best buy in terms of protection and safety. He said that meant reassuring the Board that those two departments' top priorities are not institutional needs, but maximizing public safety. He continued by saying one of the things the County needs to look at is how many Deputy District Attorneys are needed based on the crimes being committed, not based on the filings those people are generating. He discussed a situation in the 1980s when the crime rate was stable or declining, but the filings were going through the roof. He said the same was true in the Sheriff's department and the need for rural patrol and jail space should not be determined only by what is happening in the Sheriff's department, but also by what is happening in the cities, the state police and other things. Roberts stated before the County gets to the point where it can hold the Sheriff's office harmless, it needs to be convinced that every economy available has been taken and it has bought into the programs there. Roberts declared that this was the kind of prioritization that needs to occur, not declaring law enforcement off limits because it's popular. Roberts stated this discussion was long overdue and should take place candidly before engaging the rest of the public.

Harclerod said he agreed with most of what Roberts said but that public safety gets the funds the Board gives it and that priorities are set by the

Commissioners. He said the Board could set those priorities either by asking the community, or because the buck stops here, or a combination of both.

Sheriff McManus agreed that, as a group, County government needs to focus on opportunities to reallocate money from one area to another. He said there were some opportunities posed by what is happening within state government and in the redistribution of Community Corrections Act funds and how they will be utilized. McManus said there must be more responsibility and accountability because some of this money will be returned to the counties. McManus stated that the County has to take advantage of those opportunities and there is a problem with shaving the budget and trying to keep all the programs by giving something to everybody. McManus said the County needs to say, "we can't do this any more" and if whole programs need to go away, they go away--thus the County would be placing itself in a better position for citizens to understand the need.

Roberts said he agreed with that theory, but the programs that could go away tend to be very tiny dollar figures.

Commissioner Frazier took exception to some of the comments, and stated that the County did prioritize and did follow up on those priorities. She stated the real issue is the revenue picture and the inability to stabilize revenue, which has driven a lot of the decision making. She said the adopted budget is a prioritization. It is a plan by which the County provides services to the constituency. She said the County could improve the process but the ability to improve the outcome is debatable until revenues are stable.

There was a discussion regarding a telephone survey to gather community input and Van Vactor said he was meeting with someone to discuss that.

Commissioner Dumdi said the County had not effectively engaged the public by going out and talking to them in a forum format.

Commissioner Rust stated that Commissioner-Elect Weeldreyer's proposal had been very educational and useful in engaging the Board and in getting their thoughts on the table. He said he was very interested in community meetings, but felt the plan should be scaled back to be a little more realistic about what it would accomplish and that it should focus on the short-term mission.

Weeldreyer provided materials from LCC for the Board to review and recapped the discussion. She said she understood there was an immediate crisis to deal with and there were specific suggestions and options on how to do that. She said she had heard some consensus that the County government needs to look at a different way of making decisions so that it is less of a shaving and more of a sculpting concept. She stated she would be happy to pursue research of other models of strategic planning combined with a budget, and at some point present her findings to the Board for review and discussion.

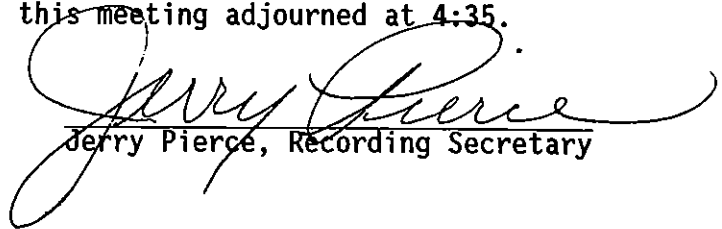
There was a discussion on future budget and strategy discussions including the entire leadership team.

Commissioner Cornacchia agreed budget and budget strategy sessions needed to include the leadership team, but felt there were some personal process issues outside of budget that needed to be talked about very candidly with this group and that he would look forward to those discussions.

Van Vactor stated he would try to schedule a meeting shortly after the first of the year to continue the budget discussion since there was a February 14 deadline on having some decisions in place.

Van Vactor reminded the Board of the Leadership Diversity training scheduled for January 17 and January 31.

There being no further business, this meeting adjourned at 4:35.


Jerry Pierce, Recording Secretary