



BOARD OF HEALTH

Minutes of October 1, 2009

Public Hearing to take testimony regarding proposed Amendments to Article I, Appendix A and Article II

SUMMARY OF ITEMS

1) CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Romero called the public hearing to order at 6:00 P.M. at the Thurston County Courthouse.

Attendance: Chair Romero, Vice-Chair Wolfe, Commissioner Valenzuela, Clerk of the Board Kathy Patton, Don Krupp, County Manager and Art Starry, Environmental Health Division Director.

Commissioner Romero explained the purpose of the hearing is for the Thurston County Board of Health to take testimony on a proposal to amend sections of the Environmental Health fee schedule that pertain to food establishments, swimming pools and spas, school inspections, and solid waste facilities. As part of this proposal they will be considering amendments to Article II of the Thurston County Sanitary Code governing Food Service Regulations. Commissioner Romero then explained the process for taking public comments.

Art Starry, Environmental Health Division Director gave an overview and background on the process used to amend the fees for the food service program, the water recreation program which permits swimming pools and spas, the solid waste program which permits certain types of solid waste facilities within Thurston County and the school safety inspection program. Adjustment to the fee schedule is due in part to the general fund cut of \$250,000.00 from Environmental Health programs. In response to those reductions, Environmental Health was directed to look to implement 100% cost recovery for permitting programs where possible.

The goals that were used in developing the fee schedule included providing the services that protect public health and to comply with State law. The community expects that there will be a safe food supply, safe water recreation facilities, and schools that are safe for children. There is also an obligation in State law to provide these services.

Part of the process included looking at staffing necessary to complete this work. The current level of service will be maintained with this fee increase. The amount of increase in fees will be 50% in most areas. The fees were also compared to counties similar to our own. The review does not include a change to the fee structure for food, water recreation or schools. Changing the fee structure for the food program in particular will be looked at in the future. The Environmental Health Division is asking for implementation of the fee increase and changes to Article II effective November 1, 2009.

Public outreach was provided by direct mail with over 1,400 pieces of mail. The information about these changes was advertised on the Public Health & Social Services Department's website. The topic was introduced and a Hearing was set at a televised Board of Health meeting, which was run on the

local community television. Two community meetings were held over the past month at which a few public comments were received. Three people attended the community meetings, two phone calls and one email was received. The general consensus of those who contacted the Department is that the fee increase is too much and happening too fast. Those who responded also noted that this will be difficult for businesses to adjust to this big of an increase at this time with the poor economy. One comment concerned the structure of the current fee schedule and that it should be fine tuned.

The following individuals provided testimony:

1. Glenn Sutt, restaurant owner - Provided an email and reviewed the points made within that email. The email was submitted into the record.
2. Josh McDonald, Washington Restaurant Association - Questioned the timing of these changes. Restaurants are the backbone of this community and economy. Understands revenues are needed, but restaurants could never make this kind of choice in their restaurant and stay in business. Thurston County will have higher fees than King County. Thanked Sammy Berg for his work.
3. Jules Grele, Powder Keg Bar & Grill - Business is down 30 to 50 percent. Has had to lay off three staff and now is working in his business. When times are tough government seems to always raise taxes. We can't arbitrarily raise our restaurant prices.
4. Larry Jenson, Red Barn Tavern - Opposed to any additional fees because the money is not there to pay the fees. Beer sales are down 35 to 40 percent. Has cut opening hours and janitorial staff. Pull tab sales are down 50 percent.

When all testimony was complete, Commissioner Romero closed the hearing and proposed that action be taken at the next Board of Health on Tuesday, October 6, 2009.

2) ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned.

BOARD OF HEALTH
Thurston County, Washington

SANDRA ROMERO, Chair

CATHY WOLFE, Vice-Chair

KAREN VALENZUELA, Commissioner

ATTEST:

Kathy Patton, Clerk of the Board

Date: _____