

Commissioners Conduct Public Hearing on Drainage

by Ralph Thomas

The Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) took testimony during a public hearing on the Drainage District Assessment System. There were approximately sixty people in attendance; most of the persons testifying were in opposition to the method of assessment. The owners of the five-acre parcels in Port Ludlow were concerned that they were being assessed at a rate that was unreasonable. They argued their assessment is about five times as much as a smaller parcel, yet both are limited to one dwelling. They also argued that the location of their property was such that it did not have a drainage problem and did not contribute to the overall problem within the District.

The method of assessment recommended by the Drainage District Commissioners to the BOCC was a system that took the acreage within the District and created an assessment factor that represented 35 percent of the assessment per acre. Each parcel would be assessed on its proportion of the total area of the District.

In the event that a dwelling was on that parcel, a factor that represented 65% of the total impervious surface of the District was added to the area charge. Each occupied parcel would be assessed on the proportion of the total and its proportion of the total impervious surface. Some considerations that could have been used would be matters in mitigation and aggravation and a method of increasing the assessment for those who gained the most benefit or caused the most problem. This adjustment would probably require zones to be created. Some of the disagreement with the system was based on these factors not being considered. Other protests were based on existing surface water systems that have already been installed and paid for by the owner. Future assessments would likely take these matters into consideration. At present the Drainage Commissioners are only concerned with an operating budget since an engineering study and recommended improvements are not yet available.

Members of the audience spoke to all the above points. Greg McCarry, representing the Developer, submitted written testimony. He also spoke to the inequity of excluding some reserve acreage while not excluding all of the land not yet built on. Throughout the testimony it became abundantly clear that the entire audience supported the Drainage District but did not necessarily support the

method of assessment first suggested. Almost everyone who addressed the Commissioners praised the efforts of the Drainage District Commissioners and agreed that storm water control was and is a community issue. The consultants hired by the County did not fare as well and did receive comments to the effect that more thought should have gone into their recommendation. To their credit they did submit revised methods of assessment for consideration by the Board of County Commissioners.

Bert Loomis spoke to the BOCC regarding the amount of money he has spent developing his on-site system and the fact that no consideration was given to that effort. Speaking of the Consultants he said, "They didn't do their homework."

The Drainage Commissioners were able to report that they had just received word that a five-year loan has been approved for \$80,000. This will spread the cost of the District out and make it easier to fund this first budget.

Commissioner Walt Cairns, responding to a resident of Plot 7, said he personally agreed they should not be required to pay an assessment to their homeowners' association and the District, and he felt that the District should take over maintenance of their drainage facility. Joe Darcy rose and said he is ready to quitclaim the facility to the District right now.

During testimony the Commissioners were asked to consider the matter of mitigation and aggravation, as well as zones based on those who received the most benefit, and those who created the most problem. They were also asked to establish an appeals process. The Commissioners were told that they had the authority to reestablish the assessment process (with public hearings) at any time it was appropriate.

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