



WASCO COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
EMERGENCY SESSION
JANUARY 23, 2014

PRESENT: Scott C. Hege, Commission Chair
Rod L. Runyon, County Commissioner
Steve D. Kramer, County Commissioner
Tyler Stone, County Administrator
Kathy White, Executive Assistant

At 11:52 a.m. Chair Hege opened an Emergency Session of the Board of Commissioners.

Interim Staffing of the Assessor's Functions

Chair Hege asked Mr. Stone to present. Mr. Stone said that there are many issues to deal with as they navigate the through the wake of the sudden departure of the County Assessor.

Mr. Stone stated that the most urgent item is to get someone in the office to work with staff during the transition. He reported that he has been in communication with the Assessors' Association and the Department of Revenue; one name has emerged as someone willing and able to come in to help run the day to day activities and be a resource for staff – Tom Linhares. Mr. Linhares is retired – formerly the Executive Director for the Multnomah County Tax Supervising Conservation Commission and previously the Columbia County Assessor with experience in both tax and assessment.

Mr. Stone explained that Mr. Linhares will locate himself in Wasco County but as a PERS beneficiary, he must limit his hours to just over 1,000 hours in the calendar year. Mr. Linhares has proposed working 4 days per week at \$30 per hour. Mr. Stone recommended moving forward with engaging Mr. Linhares.

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Commissioner Runyon asked what title would be applied to the position. Mr. Stone suggested that he be a Department Director.

Some discussion ensued regarding the possibility of an appointment for the Assessor. County Clerk Linda Brown and District Attorney Eric Nisley offered information regarding the legal process and requirements for making an appointment. Mr. Stone related a conversation with the Oregon Department of Revenue which yielded information that seemed to not always coincide with the information gathered by County staff. The conclusion of the group was that the issue of an appointment needed further exploration. Commissioner Runyon added that the DOR questionnaire for Assessor was ambiguous in some places and should be clarified.

Chair Hege asked if Mr. Linhares could be a contracted employee rather than a Director. Mr. Stone replied that under the scope of his assignments he could not come in as a contracted employee. Chair Hege asked if he would be a temporary employee. Mr. Stone replied that he would.

Commissioner Runyon asked if he should be interviewed or introduced around before being selected. Mr. Stone responded that he has spoken to Mr. Linhares who comes very highly recommended adding that he is satisfied with the recommendations. DA Nisley interjected that as a temporary employee Mr. Linhares could be terminated at any time should he prove to not meet the needs of the County.

DA Nisley advised that the Board would need to determine what supervisory authority Mr. Linhares would have; while he might prepare and review the documents, it will have to be the acting Assessor who signs the official documents. He encouraged Mr. Stone to have a conversation with Chief Appraiser Darlene Lufkin so that she understands the process. Mr. Stone replied that he had already had that conversation with Ms. Lufkin.

Some discussion ensued regarding the County job description for Chief Appraiser including language that made it clear that the position is responsible for the Assessors duties in the Assessor's absence.

Commissioner Hege asked if there are alternatives to this course of action. Mr. Stone replied that a resident of Wasco County could be appointed to the position or another Director can be assigned to oversee the office in the interim; he does not believe either option to be viable.

{{{Commissioner Runyon moved to give authority to Mr. Stone to pursue an offer to hire Mr. Linhares as a temporary Department Director for the Assessor's Office. Commissioner Kramer seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION

Some discussion ensued regarding the length of time Mr. Linhares would be engaged. Commissioner Kramer reminded everyone that Mr. Linhares employment is self-limiting as he can only work just over 1,000 in the calendar year. Mr. Stone added that Mr. Linhares has plans to be gone for an extended period in the summer but he believes the County can use his services effectively until that time.

Chair Hege brought up the State appraiser database for Wasco County and noted that there are only 6 listed; he pointed out that being an appraiser is a requirement for the position and therefore these six are potentially the only qualified residents for the elected/appointed position of Assessor. He went on to say that if for any reason those 6 are not qualified or not interested in the position it would be impossible for Wasco County to have an Assessor under the current residency requirements. He suggested that those six be contacted before anyone from the County meets with the Assessors Association so that the information is available for the discussion.

The motion was passed unanimously.}}

Chair Hege reported that he has spoken to Representative Huffman and Senator Ferrioli regarding the possibility of changing the residency requirements for smaller counties. He stated that they are in support of the idea. He also spoke with AOC and they are looking for an opportunity – a legislative concept – that could be passed. Mr. Stone added that he has talked with the Assessor's Association and they may not be interested in that change. Chair Hege noted

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that that is why he wants information that will demonstrate how small the pool of potential Assessor candidates is in a county as small as Wasco.

DA Nisely suggested that if someone who does not meet the residency requirements but is otherwise qualified could be hired similarly to Mr. Linhares and then wait for them to meet the residency requirements enabling them to file and run for office.

Ms. Brown asked that if there are no candidates for Assessor on the ballot and no one qualified is elected through write-ins, could the Board could appoint someone and enroll them in the training or would they be in the same position they are in now. DA Nisley stated that he believes the Board would be in the same position they are in now in which case they might consider hiring a temporary Director and wait for them to meet the residency requirements for election.

Chair Hege adjourned the Emergency Session at 12:18 p.m.

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Absent

Scott Hege, Commission Chair

Rod Runyon

Rod Runyon, County Commissioner

Steve Kramer

Steve Kramer, County Commissioner