

MINUTES

BOARD OF BENTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Special Board Meeting
December 9, 2009, 9:00 a.m.
Commissioners' Conference Room
Benton County Justice Center
Kennewick, WA

Present: Chairman Max E. Benitz, Jr. Chairman
Commissioner Leo Bowman
Commissioner James Beaver
David Sparks (via/video conference)
Clerk of the Board Cami McKenzie

Benton County Employees Present During All or a Portion of the Meeting: Assessor Barb Wagner; Deputy Auditor Brenda Chilton; Auditor Bobbie Gagner; Treasurer Duane Davidson; Sheriff Larry Taylor; Dixie Jameson, Jacki Lahtinen, and Richard Cloud, District Court; Prosecuting Attorney Andy Miller; Clerk Josie Delvin and Deputy Clerk Jackie Hill.

Candidate Interviews for Benton County Auditor

Chairman Benitz stated the Board had received three names from the Benton County Republican Party and would interview the candidates in the order received from the Republican Party.

Commissioner Bowman said that Patricia Holten was in his office the day before and stated she would be out of town today and would not attend.

Chairman Benitz requested the individuals not being interviewed to step out of the room during the interview process. He said this was as a courtesy, however, but was not required.

Brenda Chilton

Ms. Chilton thanked the Board for the opportunity and said she was excited about continuing the legacy that Bobbie Gagner had created.

Question #1

Please describe your most important professional accomplishments and how those accomplishments equip you for the duties of the Benton County Auditor?

Ms. Chilton provided a list of credentials and described her professional accomplishments. Additionally, she said she began her career at Benton County as an officer manager and said the

job of County Auditor was not a job you could easily step into and it took years to learn the position.

Question #2

What challenges do you think the Auditor's Office faces in the next five years?

She said the most difficult challenge was that budgets were getting tighter. She said that although they had done a good job of planning ahead, the next few years would be difficult for all offices and they needed to work together. Ms. Chilton indicated she was very familiar with what it took to keep the budget under the bottom line. Additionally, the Auditor had become the dumping ground for additional fees and it made the public very unhappy and they faced this challenge on a regular basis.

Question #3

Which of the primary duties of County Auditor is the most important duty and why?

Ms. Chilton said the Auditor had four separate and distinct departments and it was difficult to pick. However, overall being a good public steward of the public's trust was the most important duty.

Eugene Astley

Mr. Astley said the Republican Party was required by law to nominate three names and they asked for volunteers. He said that if something were to happen to Ms. Chilton, he could accept the responsibility. He said he had a lot of responsibility in his business and management and had been involved with the Republican Party and election process and came to the conclusion he could do a reasonable job for one year, if needed.

Question #1

Please describe your most important professional accomplishments and how those accomplishments equip you for the duties of the Benton County Auditor?

Mr. Astley said that in 1965 he helped create the FFTF reactor, worked for Exxon Nuclear, was the President and Assistant Vice-President of nuclear fuels plan, and was the first non Swedish to run a nuclear plan for the Swedish.

Question #2

What challenges do you think the Auditor's Office faces in the next five years?

He said the responsibility and accounting and preparing the budgets for all departments was a very complex job and that keeping up the standards equal to the way Ms. Gagner ran the department and continuing what she had already done would be his biggest challenge.

Question #3

Which of the primary duties of County Auditor is the most important duty and why?

Probably being the elections supervisor. He said it was fair to say that Benton County was losing the #1 Elections Supervisor and Auditor in the State of Washington out of 39 counties.

Commissioner Bowman said that Mr. Astley had implied he would not necessarily run for election if he were chosen. Mr. Astley replied that was correct.

The Board briefly recessed, reconvening at 9:22 a.m.

Commissioner Beaver thanked Bobbie Gagner for her dedication and service to the County and thanked the Republican Party for the list of candidates.

Commissioner Bowman also thanked the candidates and Mr. Astley for his thoughtfulness into the process of whether he could take on the responsibility for a year. Additionally, he thanked Ms. Chilton for her hard work and commitment to the community.

Chairman Benitz thanked the candidates and the Republican Party and said it saddened him that Bobbie Gagner was leaving and he thanked her for her service. He said he appreciated all the elected officials for being present and that it showed they would work together as a team.

MOTION: Commissioner Beaver moved to appoint Brenda K. Chilton as Benton County Auditor. Commissioner Bowman seconded and upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Resolutions

9.804 Appointment of Brenda K. Chilton as Benton County Auditor

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:45 a.m.

Clerk of the Board

Chairman