

**Skagit River Impact Partnership
Executive Committee**

Minutes from January 18, 2007

Present: Jon Aarstad, Chal Martin, Jana Hanson, Esco Bell, Kevin Rogerson, Harry Hosey, Scott Thomas, Chuck Bennett, Dave Olson, John Schultz, Ken Dahlstedt, Dave Brookings, Neil Hamburg, Todd Carlson, Bud Norris, Mike Anderson, Rick Blair, Kerri Grechishkin

Call to order: **Bud Norris** called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

I. SRIP Organization

Chal Martin informed members of the possibility the County may step aside from the SRIP. **Ken Dahlstedt** explained that the County is involved with many different interest groups, and anything the SRIP does to protect a certain group to the detriment of another creates conflict for them. He also indicated he felt that the SRIP should include the tribes and environmental groups. **Dahlstedt** stressed that the County Commissioners have not met and made a decision on this one way or another, but he wanted the SRIP to know that the matter will be discussed at an upcoming date. He urged SRIP members who feel strongly about this to discuss the matter with the other Commissioners, as well.

Norris stated that he does not want to fracture the group or do anything that would damage the effort of the last 2 years. He said he is concerned such a move may send a message of division and asked for the WSDOT opinion on the matter. **Todd Carlson** said that WSDOT is in the process of scoping the 2nd phase of the Freeway Master Plan. They need an answer on what flood levels will be planned for and a recognition that this is going to require a lot of money, a portion of which would most likely come from the people of the county. He said it is important to get beyond this point.

John Schultz said he feels the withdrawal of the County would be a step backwards. The County will constantly be dealing with all the entities involved anyhow, and the SRIP is a great forum and an efficient means for many different parties to meet and discuss issues. **Jon Aarstad** asked about the possibility of County staff continuing to attend meetings even if the Commissioners decide to withdraw from the group. He felt that if the connection is totally lost, it would be a disadvantage to the SRIP. **Mike Anderson** stated there would be a perception that the County is bailing out, even if that is not true. He feels the County is a major part of the group and should continue to participate as representatives for Nookachamps and other unincorporated areas.

Scott Thomas mentioned that we do need a group that incorporates all interests and at some point we will need input from other groups in order to ensure success. **Norris** said he felt that if the group is made larger it would muddy the water and **Jana Hanson** stated that the EIS would be the best forum to get input from all the other parties involved.

Martin said he believes the County can protect its interest in open process and getting along with all the different groups involved by moving forward in a separate but parallel, positive direction. It could be a logical, non-adversarial relationship that would provide many more opportunities for the SRIP to move the ball forward. **Dave Brookings** said perhaps the SRIP should clarify which direction it would like to take on all the different issues before it. There should be more dialogue between parties on all subject matter.

Dahlstedt informed members there would be a workshop with Ted Perkins of the Army Corps of Engineers on Wednesday, January 24 at 10:00 a.m. at the Burlington Fire Station. Perkins will be presenting the preliminary results of the hydraulic evaluation of proposed flood damage reduction measures for the Skagit River. There was general discussion on the matter of the GI Study being one of the sources of conflict for the County Commissioners in their participation in the SRIP. **Brookings** stated that an Executive Committee Meeting will take place on Tuesday, February 27. At that time the new Colonel will meet with the Commissioners to see if the feasibility study will move forward.

Thomas stated that it would be helpful to know precisely where the County's conflicts arise, and maybe it would be possible to avoid them in the future. **Norris** agreed that the group should meet more frequently in the future.

II. Review of Scope and Schedule of Project Work / Report to the Legislature

Harry Hosey reported that we are coming to the end of the scope of work funded by WSDOT. The deliverables include a cost benefit analysis for WSDOT and a Report to the Legislature. **Hosey** distributed a draft copy of the report's Executive Summary. The focus of the report is on the cost benefit to the WSDOT project and the Nookachamps solution as one possibility that can be studied further and compared to other future possibilities. **Hosey** said that when the report is finalized, it is imperative that the group meet with legislators as soon as possible, and it is very important for the County to be there, to be supportive, and for everyone to know what the SRIP organization will look like.

Hosey noted that \$211,000 has been freed up to continue the flood planning effort over the next 6 months. He distributed an email with a list of proposed tasks for the funding. **Hosey** added that we should aim to bring flood planning and the WSDOT master planning program closer together. **Norris** commented that the report doesn't say we will do an EIS. **Hosey** responded that the EIS would take a couple years and be in the \$2-3 million range. This is a request to legislators to continue funding for the next biennium with the money to go to the SRIP. **Neil Hamburg** brought up fish, and **Hosey** stated that this would be part of the EIS. **Thomas** asked who would be the lead agency on the EIS, and it was determined that lead agency status can be shared. **Martin** said he still does not see how we will move from where we are now to the formal EIS. **Hosey** responded that we will use the next round of funding to work this out. **Martin** added that we do not have a project, only a concept, and the hydrology issue has still not been resolved. He said he believes the only way to resolve this is through the FEMA appeal process or a meeting of technical representatives of the parties which would result in a

settlement between the parties. He was concerned that we are a long way from moving forward and the unwieldiness of the group is causing it to miss opportunities.

Carlson reported that the required funds must be transferred and that more money is needed. WSDOT is supposed to set a budget and a timeframe, and needs this to be a coordinated effort. WSDOT is ready to look into how to build and fund their project, but they are connected to this work and the flood issue.

Hosey said that cost sharing will be necessary, and **Martin** said that we must act fast to benefit from the current set of circumstances in the state legislature. He suggested that he and Dave Brookings meet with Gene Sampley to determine whether the County would be willing to support a funding request from the Legislature this session.

III. FEMA Issues

Martin stated that Smith House Report was being formalized and will be submitted to FEMA. This is mainly an issue of importance to Mount Vernon and Burlington.

IV. Next Meeting

Hanson reiterated the need for the group to meet more frequently. However, since preparation for and meetings with state legislators must take place extremely quickly, it was suggested that a small section of the group work on this immediate need. There was no objection from the larger group.

The last agenda item, History of Chehalis Flood Protection Project, will be discussed at a later date.

Meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.