

**City of Black Diamond/City of Covington/City of Maple Valley
Joint City Council Meeting Minutes
Black Diamond Mayor Howard Botts Presiding
Wednesday, July 23, 2008**

(This meeting was recorded and will be retained for a period of one year from the date of the meeting).

The Joint Meeting of the City Councils for the cities of Black Diamond, Covington and Maple Valley was called to order in the gymnasium of the Black Diamond Elementary School, 25314 Baker Street, Black Diamond, Washington, Wednesday, June 24, 2008, at 7:02 p.m., with Black Diamond Mayor Howard Botts presiding.

BLACK DIAMOND COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Howard Botts, Bill Boston, Kristine Hanson, Leih Mulvihill, and Rebecca Olness. Absent Geoff Bowie.

BLACK DIAMOND STAFF PRESENT:

Steve Pilcher, Community Development Director; Seth Boettcher, Public Works Director; and Brenda L. Streepy, City Clerk.

COVINGTON COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Margaret Harto, Marlla Mhoon, Mark Lanza, Jim Scott, Wayne Snoey, and Jeff Wagner.

COVINGTON STAFF PRESENT:

Derek Matheson, City Manager; David Nemens, Community Development Director; Richard Hart, Planning Manager; Glenn Akramoff, Public Works Director; Sharon Scott, Office Manager/Executive Assistant; Salina Lyons, Senior Planner; Brian Bykonen, Assistant Planner; and Jackie Cronk, City Clerk/PIO.

MAPLE VALLEY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Laure Iddings, Glenn Smith, Layne Barnes, Noel Gerken, Linda A. Johnson, Victoria Laise Jones, and David Pilgrim.

MAPLE VALLEY STAFF PRESENT:

Christy Todd, Interim City Manager; Philip Morley, Assistant City Manager; Nick Afzali, Public Works Director; Tony McCarthy, Finance Director; and Irvalene Moni, City Clerk.

Mayor Howard Botts opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Botts introduced himself, City of Covington Mayor Margaret Harto, City of Maple Valley Mayor Laure Iddings and welcomed everyone. Mayor Botts thanked the Covington City Council for proposing the joint meeting and asked Mayor Harto and Mayor Iddings to introduce their respective council members.

ITEMS FOR JOINT COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

1. Opening Remarks.

Metropolitan King County Council Member Reagan Dunn (District 9) provided opening remarks and commended the three cities for meeting together. Councilmember Dunn noted that Black Diamond, Covington and Maple Valley are unique in the County in the way that they are inextricably linked. Council Member Dunn explained that what happens in one City has an impact on the other two; there's no question about that. Development in Black Diamond will have an impact on Maple Valley, potential development in the donut hole will have an impact on Covington, and improvements to major roads in Covington could have an impact on driving patterns for all three cities.

Council Member Dunn further offered that Maple Valley Highway, Highway 169, and the Kent-Kangley Road are critical to the three cities in terms of the corridor stretch for transportation, jobs, and families to move back and forth through the county. Council Member Dunn pointed out that it is also important to understand these relationships and start improving the way we work together. Together the cities have an enormous influence in County politics. Council Member Dunn advised that there are nearly 50,000 residents in the three cities combined. He noted that tonight's discussion on transportation is one of the key indicators of how the cities can work together and it should not be the end of the discussion at all.

Council Member Dunn invited the cities to continue the conversations which will hopefully lead to production, especially in the areas of transportation, infrastructure and improvements. Council Member Dunn commended the councils for being together and is looking forward to a very effective summit.

Council Member Dunn introduced his wife Paige to the audience.

Mayor Howard Botts thanked King County Council Member Reagan Dunn for his comments and noted that the purpose of the joint meeting is to find ways that the cities can work together. Mayor Botts endorsed this as a time to band together. He requested the cities to ask themselves what is needed from county council members, state legislators and federal representatives and determine how to work together to have those needs met.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Mayor Botts called for approval of the agenda.

Council Action: Council Member Jeff Wagner moved and Council Member Glenn Smith seconded to approve the Agenda. Vote: 18-0. Motion Carried.

2. Presentation Highlighting the Transit System and Performance, Planned Investments in the Area, and Issues the System is Facing.

King County Department of Transportation Director Harold Taniguchi thanked the councils for inviting him and Supervisor of Service Planning, Metro Transit Division, David Hull to the meeting. Mr. Taniguchi indicated that it is a wonderful opportunity and honor to be in front of all three cities, taking part in the first tri-city meeting.

Mr. Taniguchi reviewed handouts, available to the council members and audience, which included the following:

- King County Department of Transportation Mission Statement.
- Information about King County Metro.
- Service Change Process.
- Growing Ridership.
- 2008 Ridership and Platform Hours by Subarea.
- Transit Now Components.
- Information Regarding RapidRide Implementation.
- Sales Tax and Program Costs.

Mr. Taniguchi noted that, as a result of increased gas prices, King County Metro is experiencing record breaking ridership growth. Last year they were recognized as having the highest growth of any large bus operation in the entire country. King County Metro had over 113 million trips in 2007. The organization is one of the top ten bus organizations in the country based on its size.

Mr. Taniguchi stated that the good thing they are seeing is that more and more people are choosing public transportation. The challenge associated with that is crowding. Some routes are very crowded and are busting at the seams. Too much demand too soon makes customer service a little more challenging.

Supervisor of Service Planning, Metro Transit Division, David Hull spoke about the *Transit Now* program, its components and improvements. Mr. Hull noted that they have seen a lot of growth in a lot of areas in the county, particularly in the east parts of south and the east parts of King County, and Metro Transit has not been able to keep up with that growth.

Mr. Taniguchi addressed the Councils again discussing an additional handout titled *Transportation 101 – Understanding who makes transportation decisions in the Puget Sound Region, and how they are funded.*

3. Staff Presentations from Each City on Current and Planned Transportation Improvement Projects of Regional Significance (Including SR 516 and SR 169) and on Private Development with Regional Transportation Impacts (e.g. the Donut Hole/Black Diamond Development Timeline).

Brief presentations regarding current and planned transportation projects were provided by staff from each of the three cities including: Steve Pilcher, Black Diamond Community Development Director; Seth Boettcher, Black Diamond Public Works Director; Glenn Akramoff, Covington Public Works Director; Nick Afzali, Maple Valley Public Works Director; and Christy Todd, Maple Valley Interim City Manager.

4. Presentation Regarding Diesel Motorized Units (DMU) Rail.

Maple Valley Public Works Director Nick Afzali gave a presentation on Diesel Motorized Units (DMU's), which included information regarding:

- Definition of DMU's.
- Potential Routes.
- A background of DMU's in the United States and their locations.

- Early version DMU's.
- United States Federal Railway Administration Requirements.
- DMU's in the USA and around the world.
- Portland DMU's.

Mr. Afzali noted that Diesel Motorized Units are a self-propelled passenger railcar for commuter rail or intercity rail services. DMU's can be run in multiple combinations of unpowered coaches and powered cars. The DMU contains propulsion engines and passenger seating in one railcar, unlike locomotive hauling coaches. Because of the self contained nature of diesel engines, there is no need to run overhead electric lines or electrified track, which can result in lower system construction costs.

Mr. Afzali also discussed the benefits of DMU's, noting they are lighter; produce less pollution, noise and consume less fuel compared to a locomotive-hauled train; combine propulsion and seating in the same vehicles; can burn biodiesel; and can run in the street like street cars.

5. Discussion Among Council Members Regarding How Our Cities Can Work Together to Pursue Common Transportation Goals.

Mayor Laure Iddings thanked staff from the three cities for their very informative presentations. Mayor Iddings acknowledged that it was helpful to see the programs from the other cities as Maple Valley can get so focused on their own, and sometimes it can be forgotten that programs do impact and interact with the two neighboring cities. Mayor Iddings observed that the presentations tonight were very exciting, and there are some things that she hopes the cities can follow through on, such as a joint maintenance facility. Mayor Iddings noted that while Maple Valley does not know if that project is possible, it is great that communication is starting. Mayor Iddings indicated the DMU's as most exciting.

Mayor Iddings mentioned the report from Metro noting that there may be some increased bus runs, but in her opinion it is pretty dismal when a person has to spend the night in Seattle if he or she does not catch that 5 o'clock bus leaving Seattle. Mayor Iddings further mentioned that Metro staff noted this evening that Metro may stretch the bus runs, but a specific time was not heard. Mayor Iddings stressed that is not a lot with the population increases that are currently being seen, specifically with the development of Black Diamond and the donut hole.

Mayor Iddings emphasized her opinion that the DMU is creative; it's thinking outside of the box; it's a way to move a lot of people on the rail line, get them off of the highway, and transport people to the Auburn Transit Station where they will have many different route options from there. She hoped that the three cities could work with and possibly lobby the legislature for this for further study. She felt that it is probably the most exciting transportation option that has been looked at for quite a long time. The one piece that is missing, however, is that since this is moving a lot of commuters to Auburn, Auburn needs to be part of the discussions as well because there may be some impacts there. Mayor Iddings commented that this is a great idea, and hoped that it can be a work product for the future.

Council Member Wayne Snoey mentioned that he attends the South County Area Transportation Board (SCATBd) meetings, and they are excited about DMU's. Council Member Snoey noted that the SCATBd is trying to focus its efforts in the south county to determine how to look at solving inequities that occur in this area with the ridership potential there is. Council Member Snoey felt there is a problem because the Growth Management Act inadvertently has forced jobs

into a t-core through the valley, Seattle and Bellevue. While increasing density is favorable, it is not going to solve the problem, as there is still everyone currently out here, plus the developments that are on the move, so we have to figure out how to get in. Council Member Snoey noted that, in his opinion, the only way to do that is by increasing bus service. Council Member Snoey stated that he also believes DMU's would be a wonderful way to accomplish that.

Council Member Snoey indicated his excitement that, with the price of gas, we have the best ridership increase in the United States and also a number of our major roadways are drivable again at a normal speed limit – much more than ever before. Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has said for years in their studies of I-5 that it will only take a five percent reduction to eliminate traffic. Council Member Snoey felt if we have relatively modest goals to increase our surface transportation with mass transit, not necessarily light rail but busses, then we can have huge results. He said that he felt the cities need to work together, that's the absolute key, or it's not going to happen.

Council Member Noel Gerken spoke regarding the need to look long term at Highway 169. Recently the State DOT has finally completed a Traffic Development Plan for Highway 169. Council Member Gerken reported that there had been talk about lobbying as part of working together, and he believes that is great because we can talk about improvements to Highway 169 in addition to transit. Highway 169 is a lifeline for Black Diamond and Maple Valley, so his hope is that there can be collaboration on that too. Council Member Gerken posed a question as to understanding more about the magnitude of growth that Black Diamond is planning for and what kind of impact can be expected from that because it does not look too good for Highway 169 depending upon how many trips are planned, what the build out is, and where that might be. Council Member Gerken warned that there is a need to keep an eye on this and see what can be done regionally regarding not only transit, but, with our regional roads – Highway 169, 516 and Kent-Kangley road.

Mayor Margaret Harto noted that she agrees with Council Member Gerken that it would be to the advantage of all three of our cities to apply leverage wherever they can – state, federal, county, to encourage improvements to the roads mentioned, and realizes that they're going to wait until the three cities push and push hard. Mayor Harto said that in order to get people to where they want to be, she would agree that road surface transportation is where we need to push our energies right now.

Mayor Harto indicated that tonight's presentation was the first information that she has received about the DMU concept and feels it is really exciting, but, she can see that is a long way off and it won't happen tomorrow or the next day. She said that right now we just need to move people and certainly moving them by bus, even if we can get them down into the valley, would be helpful.

Mayor Harto continued with comments regarding fighting this battle in Southeast King County, about the explosive growth we have and the lack of services, where those services that we lack end up going. She noted how difficult it is to convince people that we need to have expansion of services because here is where folks are living, this is where folks are coming to and they still need to get to the places they have to go. Mayor Harto stated that we must work together to find ways to get them there. Mayor Harto said that she also believes the other connection road; the Covington-Lake Sawyer Road, is going to become a major thoroughfare for all our cities. She believes there is going to be a triangle here and a need to look at that road as well.

Mayor Harto also commented on liking the idea of acquiring a large maintenance facility because any time that we can combine our efforts to save money by utilizing the equipment and staff that we have in a more effective manner is far better.

Council Member Glenn Smith commented on having the privilege of serving on the Suburban Cities Association Public Issues Committee with Jeff Wagner. Council Member Smith hopes that for transportation or any issue the three Councils could have briefings, possibly staff could come to various councils, so that the three councils are aware of what our issues are and can better work together.

Mayor Howard Botts commented that he would hope that the three cities could have more meetings like this. Not years apart, but, perhaps weeks apart, to work toward common goals.

Council Member Mark Lanza commented that he likes the idea of working together on common goals. Council Member Lanza stated there was talk about thinking outside the box with the DMU's and that is awesome. Council Member Lanza said that he believes it would be a great way to go and thinks the three cities should also start looking at some of the other common problems they have and ways to solve those. Two things that come to his mind are ball fields and parks. Council Member Lanza offered he does not have a lot of hope for regional transit. He suggested that the three cities look at putting some regional transit system out here. We may not be able to do it for the next five, ten years or so, but, it is something we can think about it and maybe even, down the road, a tri-city police department so that we do not have to rely upon the King County Sheriff's Office for our police services.

Council Member Wayne Snoey commented that about the major legislative session coming up at the beginning of next year and suggested that, rather than develop individual long legislative lists of things we'd like to accomplish, the three cities focus on one legislative agenda together and maybe have a short list to show that we need help for Highway 169 and Kent-Kangley. Council Member Snoey said that he believes if the three cities work together to focus on issues and combine legislative efforts, there can be actually some impact at those sessions.

Mayor Margaret Harto suggested not waiting. She indicated that City Councils meet before the legislative session. Mayor Harto said that she believes that the three cities should carry the message to the legislators that two state highways in this area need to be a higher priority before the legislative session gets here and then go to the legislative session to remind them of the message as well as provide lists.

Mayor Laure Iddings suggested that it might be possible for the city managers and mayors to meet, strategize, and move forward with these ideas because she does believe that a collective lobbying voice, starting now, before the legislative session begins is a good idea. She believes there is definitely a need and thinks that collectively the three cities need to aggressively get the message across.

Council Member Wayne Snoey suggested, from his past experience, a legislative agenda should be completed by the 1st of October because while the message will be carried to the legislative folks in January, they need to get this message much earlier than that – as soon as possible.

Council Member Noel Gerken commented that he has noticed that Covington has been using roundabouts and asked for information on those.

Mayor Margaret Harto reflected by saying that when it was first decided to discuss that issue, there were some members of the Council who said “no way,” “not ever,” and some who said, “I think it’s a pretty good idea.” Mayor Harto explained that Covington probably went through at least a two year process educating ourselves, members of the community and staff about the advantages of roundabouts. There was considerable work to gather as much data as possible and encourage citizens to visit other communities that use roundabouts.

Council Member Mark Lanza invited everyone to go through the roundabout next to Kentwood High School. The roundabout is much better than the previous lighted intersection. Roundabouts are safer, more efficient to move traffic, more aesthetic, and while it is a little more costly to construct them, they save money over time on maintenance costs. He noted that most of Covington’s residents who were dead set against having a roundabout near the high school now appreciate it.

Mayor Margaret Harto talked about the three additional roundabouts being constructed, including one where Costco is going in.

Council Member Marlla Mhoon noted that the roundabout by Kentwood High School has cut her commute time because it keeps the traffic moving. There are no stops for a traffic light and no fatal accidents – they’re very safe.

Council Member Leih Mulvihill stated that one of the things she has noticed is that everyone is well represented with regard to the transportation issue except Southeast King County. Council Member Mulvihill felt that some kind of coalition is needed to make our voices heard. Council Member Mulvihill stated additionally that they may not think we’re important, but, we are important. She is excited about the idea of forming a coalition.

Council Member Noel Gerken spoke with regard to participating regionally, that Wayne Snoey and he are members of the SCATBd, which all cities can participate on, and would encourage Black Diamond to participate as well.

Mayor Howard Botts replied that he had participated in SCATBd for several years and they never got any further than Kent.

Council Member Kristine Hanson questioned with growth management, they told all these towns that we have to expand and take on more of the population, but, have they given us the money to assist with this?

Collective “No” from council members.

Council Member Kristine Hanson stated that we’re on our own; they just threw it at us and told us we have to do it without guidance, aide or financing to do so.

Margaret Margret Harto replied that Council Member Hanson was correct.

Mayor Howard Botts stated that everyone will have to get together again.

Mayor Margaret Harto indicated that Council Members Glenn Smith and Jeff Wagner serve on the Public Issues Committee with Suburban Cities Association. She encouraged everyone who

serves on regional boards and committees such as SCA's PIC to share with those groups what took place here tonight and what our issues are to help keep us in front of those other entities and what our priorities are so that they will continuously receive the message of what we're about. That is one way for us to use our united leverage to perhaps get us one step father down the road, on the bus or on the train.

Mayor Howard Botts thanked everyone for their attendance and announced he is looking forward to the next time the three cities meet together.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Prepared and submitted by:

Jackie R. Cronk
Covington City Clerk