

Transcription of a Study Session for the 2025-26 Budget at the May 8, 2025 YRCAA Board Meeting.

The entire meeting lasted 20 minutes

20 Roll Call

19 Public Comments

18 Sandy Braden

- Asked the chair a question re Position 2
- Thornsburg answered – Currently anticipate by the end of next month
- McKinney – Public Comments is not for interaction and response with the board. It is for public comments only. But if you'd like to submit comments or have any questions you'd like to have answered you can certainly do so to Mr. Thornsburg.
- Braden – Well, You just heard.
- 17:30 Deccio – Thank you

17:30 Carole Degrave re air quality at Rocky Top

15:30 No response from the board

15:17 Deccio – We will go on to the public hearing for the FY 2025-26 budget. And what are we doing with that?

Thornsburg – Opening it to public comment on the budget.

Deccio – OK. That's it?

Deccio – This hearing is open to public comment on the 2025-26 budget.

14:55 Deccio – Do we have any public comment?

14:50 Deccio – OK. Seeing none. Uhh we will go on to item 6 then and we will close the . .

14:42 Thornsburg – Yeah you can close the public hearing for the budget but there are a couple of comments that I have . . .

Deccio - OK

14:35 Jones – Can the board make comments?

1434 Thornsburg – Certainly

14:34 Deccio – Absolutely not ha ha. Laughter

14:31 Thornsby – You can make your own comments or ask questions or whatever

14:27 Jones – So I have a couple questions. So, do you have any perspective of the budget based on what's in the state budget currently?

14:16 Thornsby – Uhh no. What I can say is that the current federal proposed budget that came out, it was earlier this week, uhh, from the current administration called for – now Presidents produce all kinds of budgets and make all kinds of proposals and virtually none of them ever end up where they started, so just there's a lot of dealing and horse trading that goes on between now and the final budget, but the request starting off was for a reduction in EPA funding and grants of, I think, just under 55%, more than half. So if that's where you're, if you look at it, uhh, like negotiating the bi-par, uhh, you start off with a number that's lower than what you want, and figure you'll come up, but you don't figure you'll come all the way up. And so, I think there's some reasonable basis for believing there will be reductions of some kind. Now, whether that's 10% or 20% or 30% who knows and my crystal ball has been in the shop for years. So, I can't tell you, but the ask is substantial, it is enormous compared to past years. So, if even a fraction of that comes to pass, we likely will see some kind of impact, unless the grant programs are somehow exempted from those cuts in negotiations, which is also possible.

12:29 Jones – Well. I looked up the Washington Dept. of Ecology budget for the year, the consolidated one between the House and the Senate. There's virtually no reduction there.

Deccio – Good

Thornsby – No, I don't think there'll be a . . . but then we don't uhh . . most of the monies that we're talking about relying on in our case are coming from the federal government, not from the state government. The state government tends to fund sort of programs and so you have things like the wood smoke program and monitoring and I think its uhh. I think there's a potential for some reduction in the wood smoke reduction program. I think there's a . . . I think that's possible. I think monitoring is probably unlikely, uhh it could be affected, so I don't see large impacts on either one of those, although there could be some minor ones.

11:27 McKinney – I have a comment.

Thornsby – No, you are not on. Laughter

11: 25 Thornsby – Your light is not on

11:26 McKinney – I think Dr. Jones brings up a good point. And I just want to make sure we emphasize the reason behind that. The reason why there's a massive proposed reduction from the federal government in funding because the American public has overwhelmingly

said that we have over-regulation and so one way to stop over-regulation is to stop the funding of over-regulation. I think its clear that there is going to be some give and take and pull as you well described. But certainly that is the root cause of the action.

10:47 Jones – I have a question about the wood smoke education. We're the only ones that do that, I think.

10:39 Thornsby – Uhhm I'm not aware that we are the only ones.

10:37 Jones – So, Mark Edler does a bunch of that work?

10:34 Thornsby – If you're talking about the wood smoke education. So we do a shared, generally a shared uhh run of advertising uhh talking about wood smoke. We do that in partnership with Benton Clean Air. Mostly because the television market overlaps between the two, so it's a more efficient use of funds. I can't say there is no other clean air agency in Washington that does not do it.

10:02 Jones – More of the schools, probably

Thornsby – That could be

Jones – Smoke schools

10:00 Thornsby – Yes, Now the Northwest Opacity piece, that's correct. We do that pretty much exclusively. In fact, we have people from Ecology that go through our program as well as other clients and their agencies. There's not a lot of demand for it so it's, there's not a lot of financial incentive for a lot of people to do it because it's just not a big enough group.

9:34 Jones – Sure. Under wages and benefits, in your description you've added a 3% COLA to the wages and benefits.

9:27 Thornsby – We calculated in 3% to allow for what might happen. We felt it might be somewhere at or below 3%. I think the last time I looked, and we will before we implement, I think we were running I think at 2 or 2.2%. That sticks in my mind.

9:05 Jones – So salaries and benefits have always been implemented through board resolution. So, I would like to have those 3% COLAs taken out of this budget. Would you please? And any increase in salaries and benefits will be done by resolution. There's plenty of funds in the reserve to cover that if we decide to do that at a later date.

8:47 McKinney – I will concur. I recall we had the same conversation last year and the intent was to allow, of course, for the budget to allow for the likelihood or the possibility but I would concur with Dr. Jones.

8:27 Thornsby – So, so what you're, so what you're asking for is, if I understand this correctly, is you're asking for is to account for in the budget but you want to adopt it specifically.

8:15 Jones – No

8:15 McKinney – No

8:11 McKinney – No, proposing a budget that has no increase to wages and benefits.

8:09 Thornsby – Oh

7:54 Deccio – Well, is that everything?

7:50 Deccio – OK, do you have anything else to add?

7:47 Thornsby – Well I just, I just want to make sure I understand. Uhhm, so the expectation at the next meeting is to have a budget without that, and then have a proposed resolution with it? Or just nothing across the board?

7:23 Jones – Nothing across the board. We can make a resolution at a later date. So, reduce the salaries by 3% or however you calculate that.

7:11 McKinney – That's how we've done that at the county Mr. Thornsby is that if the op board makes any changes, then we would amend the budget to accommodate that.

Jones – Thank you.

6:38 Deccio – Then we will move on to item 6, Board meeting minutes for April 10th.

5:54 Correction to the April minutes by Commissioner McKinney – Only one correction. Commissioner McKinney stated the continued targeting of the agriculture community is contemptible. I said despicable. And I would like the record to reflect that.