

EXCERPT OF MINUTES

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL **Regular County Council** February 20, 2001

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Council Chair L. Ward Nelson in the Council Chambers, 311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham, Washington.

Also Present:

Dan Mcshane
Connie Hoag
Barbara Brenner
Sam Crawford
Robert Imhof

Absent

Marlene Dawson

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Bob Wiesen, 3314 Douglas Road, stated efficient trucking is the economic lifeblood of the agricultural community. The farming community uses many of the types of equipment that the Washington Alliance for Safe Highways (WASH) is against. He provided photos of Whatcom County trucks that exceed the federal standards. The Washington Alliance for Safe Highways is an anti-truck group financed by railroad interests. Their representative made several inaccurate statements and one outrageous claim that 90 percent of the trucks on the road have safety faults. Each year, all heavy truck enforcement officials pick a week when they put every available inspector out. During that week, they inspect hundreds of thousands of trucks across the country. Generally, they come up with 25 percent of the trucks inspected that can be put out of service for safety errors. However, that doesn't mean that 25 percent of the trucks on the road are unsafe. They select trucks that aren't safe historically, or look unsafe. They can't inspect every truck, and have to be selective. The data doesn't reflect the true picture. Safety conditions improve every year. Equipment, inspection, and drivers are better. Reconsider the resolution. It is hypocritical to support a group that doesn't want other states to use the same efficient trucking equipment that the State of Washington uses safely.

Hoag asked if the trucks in the photos don't meet federal standards. Wiesen stated they all exceed the 80,000-pound gross standard that this lobbying group is trying to keep enforced.

Hoag asked how they are allowed if they exceed the federal standard. Wiesen stated they were grandfathered in because the state historically allowed that kind of equipment. If this group gains considerable power, then the group will have the power to reduce what is allowed by grandfathering.

Hoag asked how the trucks in the photo violate the standard. Wiesen stated they run at 105,500 pounds, which is over the 80,000-pound federal standard on five axles. Most of those trucks have seven or eight axles, which has less weight per axle and tire.

Imhof stated that, federally, one is allowed only 80,000 pounds, no matter how many axles there are.

Brenner moved to rescind the resolution in opposition to lifting the current freeze on truck length and weight restrictions (AB2000-409). The entire time they talked about triple trailers. It wasn't just about length. It was about weight. She wanted to see an amended resolution that is about the triple trailers. It is not fair the way this is. This weight is already allowed in the state and seems to be working. They already allow the weight issue. She was bothered that there is a resolution supporting a freeze for other people when it is allowed here. She moved to rescind the resolution in support of WASH.

Imhof stated the two items that brought this forward were the concern of the limit on the 80,000-pound gross weight and the concern of triple trailers. He could support rescinding the motion on the 80,000-pound weight limit, but not the triple trailers. He suggested developing a resolution to that effect, and approving it at the next meeting.

Brenner stated her motion was to rescind the portion of the resolution regarding the weight limits.

Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council, stated it would be cleaner for the record to do a new resolution that would rescind the previous resolution, and bring it forward at the next Council meeting.

Brenner withdrew her motion. She would put the new resolution into committee.