In answer to Mr. Strassler's question on whether or not the $15 license surcharge would offset the defeated law and justice levy measure, the Chairman indicated there had been a short fall in the Current Expense Fund to fund current troopers.

Commissioner Colby commented additionally that the Law and Justice levy would have taken in just over a million dollars; $300,000 would just about off set the roughly $260,000 the Road Department contributes for Deputies.

Ken Buehn, North Whidbey, contended the proposal was contrary to State Law and intent of RCW which indicated intent was that as a condition of levying, receiving and expending local option transportation revenues no local government agency can use the revenue to replace, divert or loan any revenues currently being used for the transportation purposes to non-transportation purposes.

Commissioner Colby confirmed that in fact Sheriff's Deputies patrolling the roads were considered as a legitimate expense for road funds.

The Chairman clarified that he had previously stated when the proposed 1993 budget was presented that he could not support same unless something was implemented to give the Road Department back the money used to fund deputies in order to balance the Current Expense Fund.

Tom Kelly, Coupeville, questioned if this would also go towards supplementing the $127,195 for 4.5 acres purchased on Camano Island which was not budgeted for.

Mr. Hyland responded that the expenditure for the property was coming from a separate Capital Improvement Fund.

Bert Blakley, Coupeville, asked where the money that was transferred from the road fund went.

The Chair answered that the funds came from the Road Fund and went to Current Expense to help balance the budget.

Nick Carter, Oak Harbor, vigorously opposed the idea because of concern for those who can ill afford the added license fee, and believed it was inequitable. He suggested this was a matter that should have been on the ballot.

Keith Slay, Coupeville, suggested the idea of taking surplus money from a fund that should be frozen for road purposes and placing it into the general fund was a matter the general public resented, noting it appeared to circumvent those issues on the November ballot that were voted down.

Tom Roehl objected to the proposed fee increase, and believed that the Board should look at the budget and if there is a problem balancing the budget, that instead of looking for new revenue sources, should analyze the budget and cut services that are really not needed, i.e. those entered into in the past four to six years should be the first programs cut. He also suggested that the County stop accepting grant monies that require matching funds from the County and services before a budget is adopted.

Chuck Hart, Polnell Shores, observed that the Board in coming up with this proposal at this time erred in not analyzing the mood of the taxpayers. He saw this to be a situation generating animosity among voters and will make it harder for legitimate proposals in the future.

Caroline Thomas, Oak Harbor, representing United We Stand America, was concerned with how long the surcharge would be effective and that it may be used simply for impulsive expenditures.

Bill Porter, Camano Island, addressed the question of fees versus taxes, feeling taxes were adequate now. He did complain that the last two or three years the County did not have a balanced budget and had operated in total confusion, not in compliance with the intent of the law regarding a balanced budget. He saw no excuse for taking money from the Road Department and spending it elsewhere. He suggested the Board should have applied requirements of environmental review necessary when there is development, and require the developer pay their share of the impact from that development.

Chairman Koetje clarified what he stated, commenting he should have said that it would make the budget a lot easier to achieve. He believed there were things that could have been done to balance the budget without this fee increase.

Don Jewett did not believe the proposed fee related at all to roads and did not understand how three or four deputies of the Sheriff's Department could be paid for from the Road Fund.

Gene Coleman, North Whidbey, suggested the matter be put to the vote of the entire County, and not decided only by the Board and those in the audience at this time.

Charles Kowalski, Oak Harbor, commented on an issue that neither Island County nor Oak Harbor seemed to think much of that he felt would be an adequate source to take advantage of, which is impact fees. If there is a deficit, let growth pay for growth.

Forest Davis, Admiral's Cove area, spoke against the proposed fee as a regressive tax with no justification. If additional fees are needed and can be justified, those fees must fall in a non-regressive way and fall on those who use the roads. He did note that there are many vehicles used on the Island, particularly in Oak Harbor, which are registered outside of the State because of the military situation.

Jerome Sheperds [sp], Oak Harbor, noted that the Seattle PI indicated recently that the State of Washington was now fourth runner up for the highest taxing state in the country.

Public Comment closed.

COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS/ACTION

Chairman Koetje observed that the majority of people in Island County were anti tax/government, yet he noted that services needed to be provided, such as law enforcement, roads, and some service towards controlling growth. Some of the options he suggested to possibly look at in helping for the future were: eliminate funding from Current Expense for dog control, parks, WSU Extension Service, County Fair, Public Health Poling and Senior Transportation on Camano Island. He emphatically stated that it was never his intent that the proposal look like a smoke screen, rather he made a demand on his colleges that if the budget for 1993 were passed, he wanted something for roads in return. He agreed that it was clear now that that appeared to have been poor judgment on his part, and acknowledged he listened and heard what the public had to say, clearly the consensus the proposal not be adopted, and he would abide by that consensus.

Commissioner Colby mentioned that he came to about the same conclusion as the Chair. He took issue with the comment made that the County did not have a balanced budget, confirming that in fact the budget was balanced as required by law. He added, too, that the current Board had had to be more realistic in looking at how to address expenses of the County, and turned to every fund for payment of administrative costs paid back to current expense fund. One of the realities of the Road Fund Commissioner Colby pointed out was the road shops, two of which were in bad shape and had to be replaced.