

From: Jill Johnson [mailto:jill@oakharborchamber.com]
Sent: Friday, April 01, 2011 12:26 PM
To: UTC DL Records Center
Subject: Public Comment Docket 101661 & Docket 042090
Importance: High

March, 29, 2011
Docket: T-101661 and A-042090

Commissioners
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
Olympia, Washington

Re: Comments Docket T-101661 and Docket A-042090

Rising costs of operating a fuel-dependent business is a real issue facing many in the local business community including locally owned and operated Whidbey-SeaTac Shuttle. These uncontrollable changes in operating costs dramatically impact the companies bottom line and are forcing them to look for alternative ways to cut costs in their business including:

1. Layoffs
2. Reduction in Community Sponsorships
3. Reduced Service Hours and operations

Obviously the need to engage in some sort of regulation is understandable, however, restricting a businesses ability to serve its community, making a decision that would result in a businesses laying off employees and adding to the already rising unemployment rate in the state, and adversely impacting several local non-profits by indirectly cutting off their source of funding through the reduction of sponsorship funds seems short-sighted.

Maybe you are not from a small town, but in this community Whidbey SeaTac Shuttle is a strong community supporter and advocate. In fact they were the communities 2010 Business of the Year. They earned that recognition for their involvement, leadership, and professional business practices. This is not a company that is out to get rich...this is a company that yes, wants to make a profit, but also gives generously to the communities it serves. It employees many local people at a variety of age groups offering employment options that are often hard to come by for many in this community, especially in certain demographics.

Maybe this letter should be more formal and less personal. In fact I have tried to right this appeal to you to sound more "official" and researched. But the truth of it is, I know these people and so do the 480 other local Chamber members and business leaders that I represent and we speak united when we say that Whidbey SeaTac Shuttle is diligent with their business, they care about their product and their customers, they want to do the right thing by their employees, and they share the wealth with others in the community. They are the type of business and business leaders that small communities like ours depend upon.

It is not in their power to control gas prices. They cannot operate a businesses successful if they do not have a mechanism (like fuel surcharges) that enables them to respond to unforeseen changes in their

operating costs. This (fuel surcharges) seems like such a little thing to offer a business that is fighting to keep people employed. Is what is gained by taking this option away from them worth what it will cost our local economy in the long run? Is it worth what will be paid out in unemployment benefits? Is it worth restricting the entrepreneurial efforts of another business?

And it's not just Whidbey SeaTac Shuttle that will be impacted. This decision could impact companies like Waste Management, and Island Disposal who are also large local employers in our communities. Every decision that pulls money away from their bottom lines puts local jobs at risks. This is a small town, jobs are hard to come by and these types of actions and activities have consequences for our town, our workers, and our non-profits. Simple changes to fuel surcharges are not simple to our local families. This is not an economy where things operating expenses can change and businesses can easily absorb the changes. This is an economy where if operating costs rise, revenues must rise with them or sacrifices in other areas will have to be made.

It just seems to me, that our leadership should be doing everything in it's power to stimulate growth in the private sector, to find ways to keep our private businesses operating, and to keep people working. If that is not the overall goal of your decision making then I would, respectfully, suggest that you walk down a small town main street, or call a local non-profit, or even speak to someone in a WorkSource office. They will all tell you that the hardships that decisions like this place on locally owned and operated businesses are real, and the consequences are even more real, not just to the business itself, but also to the community that it supports and serves.

Sincerely and Respectfully,
Jill Johnson
Executive Director
Greater Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce

Jill Johnson
Greater Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce
32630 SR 20
Oak Harbor, WA 98277
(360) 675.3755

"Building Community One Business at a Time"