



RE: Klickitat County Administrative Appeals Process

Date: May 1, 2022

To: Klickitat County Commission

Dear Commission members,

This letter is from the Yakima County Farm Bureau (YCFB). YCFB is a grass roots organization with 3100 members consisting of farmers and ranchers with operations both large and small as well as other folks with interest in agriculture affairs in Yakima and Klickitat Counties.

The YCFB has become aware that the Klickitat County Commission is considering eliminating the Administrative Appeals Process (AAP) in regards to its decisions. The YCFB believes that redress of grievance for its citizens is paramount and that Klickitat County should not pursue this.

On April 26, 2022 the Commission held a hearing in regards to this matter and there was strong public sentiment presented – NONE of it in favor of having “less voice”.

If the AAP were to be eliminated, a citizen or group would only have the option of hiring an attorney and filing a lawsuit in Superior Court to have a dissenting voice to a Commission action.

The most important tenant of local governance is that the citizens have an effective voice in front of those governing them. When the citizens are forced to choose to spend large sums of money to file a lawsuit, less voice will be the result. Many smaller decisions the public disagrees with will just be unchallenged because of an unreasonably high “bar”. Vulnerable populations will be disproportionately impacted by this decision – minorities, less economically advantaged persons and the elderly.

The AAP also serves an important role as a “filter” to cases that may not rise to the significance of a Superior Court case. Currently, many matters get resolved in the administrative proceeding and do not move to a judicial lawsuit. If Klickitat County citizens have only the courts to rely upon, the already clogged court system will have even more cases to deal with. The YCFB believes this would be a poor outcome.

A more insidious reason the YCFB opposes elimination of the AAP exists. Apathy and cynicism are at an all-time high amongst the public and this is an especially ill-advised time to consider limiting the people’s voice with regards to government.

According to the Commissions schedule, it will meet on May 10, 2022 to further discuss abolishment of the AAP. The YCFB urges the Klickitat County Commission to not eliminate or curtail the voice of its citizens by eliminating the Administrative Appeals Process in Klickitat County.

Thank you,

Mark Herke

President, Yakima/Klickitat County Farm Bureau