

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1347

As Reported by House Committee On: Local Government

Title: An act relating to the creation of a countywide port district within a county containing no port districts.

Brief Description: Concerning the creation of a countywide port district within a county containing no port districts.

Sponsors: House Committee on Local Government (originally sponsored by Representatives Riccelli, Holy and Ormsby).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 1/25/17, 2/9/17 [DPS], 1/23/18, 1/25/18 [DP];

Finance: 2/21/17, 2/23/17 [DPS(LG)].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes a county with no port district prior to December 31, 2020, to create a countywide port district by a ballot proposition and elect the initial port commissioners at the next general election instead of at the same election as when the ballot proposition is submitted to voters to form the district.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Appleton, Chair; McBride, Vice Chair; Gregerson and Peterson.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Pike, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Taylor.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Griffey, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Cassie Jones (786-7303).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Background:

Port Districts.

Port districts are special purpose districts with the authority to impose property tax levies. Port districts may take up an entire single county, or may be less than countywide. A port district is authorized to acquire, construct, maintain, operate, develop, and regulate harbor improvements, commercial development, and rail, motor vehicle, water, and air transfers, and terminal facilities.

Formation of Countywide Port Districts.

Countywide port districts may be created by a ballot proposition that is submitted to county voters for their approval or rejection if either: (1) the county legislative authority adopts a resolution to submit a ballot proposition; or (2) county voters sign a petition allowing for a ballot proposition to be submitted. The number of signatures needed on the petition must be equal to at least 10 percent of the number of county voters who voted in the last general county election. The petition must be filed with the county auditor. Once it is certified, the county auditor returns it to the county legislative authority, who either submits the proposition at the next general election or calls a special election.

There are three commissioners in each countywide port district. The initial port commissioners must be elected at the same election as when the ballot proposition is submitted to voters to authorize the creation of the port district. There is no primary election, and the individuals with the majority of votes will be the initial port commissioners.

Summary of Bill:

Prior to December 31, 2020, a county with no port district may create a countywide port district by a ballot proposition submitted to the voters. In these elections, all of the procedures to form a countywide port district must be followed, except that the initial port commissioners are not required to be elected at the same election as when the ballot proposition creating the port district is submitted to voters. Rather, the initial commissioners may be elected at the next general election. In addition, a countywide port district created in an election separate from the election of initial port commissioners may not levy taxes until after the election of the port commissioners for that port district. These provisions expire on December 31, 2020.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This proposal was brought forward by the business community to provide another economic development tool in the toolbox. Voters may vote on formation of a less than countywide port district and then elect the port commissioners at a subsequent election. This bill allows this same bifurcated election for countywide port districts. Ports want the flexibility to elect commissioners at a separate election. No taxes would be levied by the port until the commissioners are elected.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Riccelli, prime sponsor; and Jim Hedrick, Greater Spokane Incorporated.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.