

## Commissioners OK juvie funds

By Steven Friederich

The Daily World

**MONTESANO** — The Grays Harbor County commissioners approved spending \$225,000 on Monday for the juvenile detention center to continue functioning.

Superior Court Judge Dave Edwards said without those funds the facility would have been forced to close on Nov. 16.

With the funds for juvenile detention center approved and \$148,020 approved two weeks ago for the Superior Court budget, the commissioners have, in essence, taken back the cuts from the two entities they ordered in the budget in January.

Edwards acknowledged that there will likely be a short respite in the lawsuit over funding between the commissioners and the judges. Although, the lawsuit could still carry weight during hearings for the 2013 budget slated for next month. Edwards said that the judges don't plan on asking for the lawsuit to be dismissed anytime soon.

The judges are suing the county commissioners in Thurston County Superior Court, alleging that the budget cuts imposed in January by the commissioners for the 2012 budget year were a violation of the Separation of Powers doctrine, guaranteed by the Constitution. The commissioners say they have the right to cut the courts' budgets and have filed a countersuit against the state, saying the state has failed in its duty to provide adequate funding for the counties. The state has denied the allegations.

Judge Edwards notes that all of the budget requests made by the judges in the fall of last year have been granted by the commissioners, even if it took a year to get the funds.

Special Attorney General Scott Missall, representing the judges, has already withdrawn his motions asking for a Thurston County judge to order the funds be directed to the judges' budgets.

The \$225,000 was approved by the commissioners Monday afternoon without any public statements. Public comment was solicited, but no one testified for or against.

After the meeting, *The Daily World* asked for comments from the three commissioners.

“In years’ past, when they’ve needed funding, we’ve given it to them,” Commissioner Mike Wilson said. “This is the way it works.”

Edwards attended the public hearing Monday afternoon ready to answer questions. But no one asked him anything.

Edwards said since he and his fellow judges sent a letter on Aug. 31 asking for the funds, the commissioners have not asked him any questions or sent him any correspondence.

“If they had questions, I would have thought they’d ask, but I have a feeling they know why we need the funds,” Edwards said.

Edwards said he hopes the commissioners come ready with questions during the 2013 budget hearings, which he hopes result in an understanding and “good back-and-forth.”

The Juvenile Detention Center is requesting \$1.5 million, which is about \$100,000 more than what’s being spent now; although it’s \$350,000 more than what the commissioners wanted the detention center to spend.

Edwards says he’s asking to fill a vacant probation officer position, which was budgeted but remains empty. He also wants to hire two new detention officers and promote a probation officer to director of court services.

The Superior Court is asking for \$717,661, which is \$31,334 more than what’s being spent now, and \$85,000 higher than what the commissioners wanted the judges to spend.

“This is not a budget of things we want,” Edwards said. “This is a budget of what we need.”