

**Minutes Spokane Valley Business Association
April 8th, 2009 - By Terry Lynch**

This morning's meeting started with Mr. Larry Bush, Principal of the SPOKANE VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL, a department of the West Valley School District, giving a very thorough report on the reality of high school education today and the efforts made in the WVSC's "alternative high school" to develop successful young citizens for our community. I use quotes on the identification because it is no longer considered a alternative.

From the report Mr. Bush gave us, one could say it is the future and the future is now. His organization is having outstanding success preparing young people for their future. He reported close to 100% continuing education plans for his school's graduating class.

In the overall discussion he explained the funding and how tax money from the state follows the students to the school they enroll in. He explained how a student can make "choices" to attend a different school from where he/she lives. Overall, the discussion was very wide ranging, extremely enlightening and much too short for all the questions the SVBA members had. We will have to invite Mr. Bush back to give us an update on his very worthy enterprise. In the meantime, should our members have need to discuss WEB SITES he recommends calling Erick Jureson 922.5475. Mr. Bush describes SVHS as similar to a charter school with a waiting list to enroll.

Our second speaker today was County Commissioner Mark Richard. Commissioner Richard gave a very thorough overview of current concerns of the Spokane County Board of Commissioners starting with the YMCA Conservation Futures investment. Mark stated in that of the population of the county, 45-49% live in the city of Spokane. In that this opportunity is very unique, up to now all investments for the Conservation Futures program have been in rural areas, there has been a great deal of discussion on the issue. The essence of it is that to preserve the possibility of returning the site to a more natural habitat, the YMCA had to remain in the hands of the public and not become a commercial enterprise. There was a lively discussion on this issue and for the most part the SVBA supports the intent, it is only that there is concern with the ownership of the property when all is done. There is a healthy concern that the city of Spokane may not be so insistent the property remain as public land.

Mark's next issue was the need to replace the jail and he listed all the issues we are aware of; needing more bed space, being booted out of airport property and the current recidivism rate among criminals and the ridiculous rotating door for those caught. His suggestions are that there will need to be a small property tax increase to build the jail. Then there is the ongoing cost of operating the new jail and he suggests this must be handled by the sales tax increase that almost passed this last

year. There are many issues in Public Safety he touched on and we will need to have Mark return to give us an update in several months. Hopefully he can enlighten us on progress being made towards the new jail and it's operation. His final commentary was to report there was before the legislature an effort to allow counties to impose a 1% utility tax on all utilities except natural gas. This money is needed to keep funding the county government as we have in the past (in terms of income) to replace the funding lost to annexation on the north and west side of Spokane. The county stands to loose many millions of dollars of property tax to Airway Heights with an annexation soon to conclude.