

the Courthouse Journal

W A C O U N T I E S . O R G

March 27, 2009

Issue No. 11

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Courthouse Journal*

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Washington Association of County Officials
Washington State Association of Counties



April 1st is Scholarship Deadline! ...and that's no fooling!

Five scholarships in the amount of \$3,000 are available from the Washington Counties Scholarship Fund but... There is little time left to apply!

The awards are available to students who will be enrolled full-time in the 2009/10 school year in a baccalaureate degree, associate degree, or vocational/technical certification program. Eligible students include dependent children of county employees. For more information go to <http://wacounties.org/waco/>. *Applications must be postmarked no later than April 1!*

WSAC Board of Directors Meets in Olympia

The WSAC Board of Directors held its regular quarterly meeting on Thursday, March 19 and took action on the following items:

- Initiated a Strategic Planning Process for the Washington State Association of Counties
- Adopted a resolution in support of King County's "Multi-Lateral Statement of Principles" for ethics in public service, and directed staff to work with MRSC on disseminating examples of County Ordinances, Resolutions, and Policies for Ethics and Public Service
- Received an update on the work of the WSAC Bylaws Review Committee
- Received an update on an analysis being performed on the Washington Counties Building and Property Options/Alternatives
- Made the following appointments/recommendations for Boards and Commissions

Job announcements & links to County Employment pages at:

<http://wacounties.org/>

the Courthouse Journal

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(WACO) wacounties.org/waco

and the Washington State Association of Counties

(WSAC) wacounties.org/wsac

We welcome your suggestions and contributions. The weekly / bi-weekly deadline is noon Wednesdays. Direct inquiries and correspondence to - *The Courthouse Journal*, 206 Tenth Av SE, Olympia, WA 98501

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Tom Robinson, Timber Program Manager

Gary Rowe, WSACE Managing Director & Integrated Permitting and Mitigation Project (IPRMT)

Tonia Sugarman, County Training Institute (CPO) and L&I Retro Project Manager

- Appointed Douglas County Commission Dale Snyder to the County Road Administration Board
- Nominated Cowlitz County Commissioner Kathleen Johnson to the Sentencing Guidelines Commission
- Nominated Mason County Commissioner Ross Gallagher to the Emergency Management Council
- Nominated Stevens County Commissioner Merrill Ott to the Public Works Board
- Nominated three Engineers to the Public Works Board:
 - Frank Abart, Public Works Director, Whatcom County
 - Jolene Gosselin-Campbell, Public Works Director/County Engineer, Chelan County
 - Toby Rickman, P.E., Deputy Director, Public Works, Pierce County
- Were reminded that we have openings on:
 - Farmland Preservation Task Force
 - State Interoperability Executive Committee
 - Oil Spill Advisory Council (Gov. proposed elimination 6/2009)

To view the entire packet of the Board Meeting, including reports, briefings, and resolutions, please visit:

<http://wacounties.org/wsac/Member/March2009BoardPacket.pdf>

The Toughest Guy I Know

by Bob Carlton, WACO Staff

Most of us go through life on a day- to-day basis. We maybe have an eye toward retirement at some point, but it can be a rather nebulous thought foreshadowed by everyday activities and just life in general. But once in awhile, life conspires to bring us up short and demand our undivided, complete attention.

That has been the case for the Toughest Guy I know. Just a very short time ago, this guy was laughing, joking and very seriously doing his job as an elected official. Well respected within the Assessors' organization and well respected by other elected officials across the state as well. I have known this tough guy for the better part of 15 years or so and came to rely on his knowledge, judgment and dedication when we were trying to solve problems related to Assessor functions. Always there, and always willing to lend a hand to others.

This guy loved to listen to "Blood Sweat and Tears" on his stereo, and maybe because we came from similar backgrounds we gravitated to one another. Both of us in Future Farmers of America in school, and both of us being

Legislative Committee Schedules and Agendas:

<http://www.leg.wa.gov/wsladm/calendar.cfm>

Bill Information: www.leg.wa.gov

products of the 60s and all of the upheaval and political unrest we saw firsthand.

This tough guy even succeeded me as President of the Washington State Association of County Assessors, and one of my fondest memories will always be of playing "Find the Gavel" at the Rosario Resort in the San Juan Islands.

If you never got the chance to meet or work with this tough guy, it is your loss. I did, and I will always remember and cherish that; along with fondness for the meetings where we could get together and compare notes. I'm going to miss that.

And then life happened - a brain tumor at a relatively young age. But still he soldiered on, never complained, and did what the doctors said needed to be done. And then he tried to come back. I will say at this point that the staff of the Skagit County Assessor's Office rallied behind their boss, and did everything within their power to help him. I felt at times that his people would literally walk through fire for him. Not because they had to, but because they wanted to and wanted to help him. Again and again they came to his aid and took time out of their own lives. If you would ever be unfortunate enough to find yourself in a similar position, you will quickly learn whether you are respected, admired and loved as a boss or whether you are simply feared and tolerated. One can only hope that it will be the former. You cannot buy that kind of devotion; you have to earn it.

This tough guy realized that due to the trauma of the tumor, he could not come back and function at the level that was required - and not at the level he demanded of himself. Despite his work ethic and all of the wishing and hoping, it just was not meant to be. And he had to make a decision, probably the toughest decision that he, or you, or I, would ever have to make. And he made it.

Mark Leander is leaving his office and position as Skagit County Assessor this early June. He leaves behind many fond memories and accomplishments, and most important he leaves behind many past and present Assessor friends and other elected officials who had the pleasure and experience serving with Mark. Mark, please take with you from us at WACO our best wishes and hopes for the future. And may the wind always be at your back.

Budget, Finance and Taxes

Property Tax Related Bills

by Bob Carlton, WACO Staff

Two thirds of the way through Session 2009, and some of the smoke has cleared--at least as far as Property Tax related bills go. When in full swing, there were over 70 Property Tax Bills that had been introduced. This is almost exactly double the amount from a single prior session. The good news is that for the most part we have winnowed it down to three that are left and viable. The bad news is that the other 67 will most assuredly be reintroduced in the short session year 2010.

This was the year of the Horse in Washington State. While other cultures may worship the Year of the Monkey or the Year of the Ox, we settled on horses. Evidently even though Horses don't vote, they do hold a considerable amount of political clout in this state. To that end, **SHB 1733** Equine Use for Current Use will most probably become law. The operative portion of the law states: *(f) Any land that is used primarily for equestrian related activities for which a charge is made, including, but not limited to, stabling, training, riding, clinics, schooling, shows, or grazing for feed and that otherwise meet the requirements of (a), (b), or (c) of this subsection.*

As an example, included is a link to a website of a facility that would apparently now qualify. The link is: <http://www.callahanshowhorses.com/> This property is not currently enrolled in the Current Use Agricultural Program, but may be in the future. It is 14.46 acres in size. Schedule F's for Farm Income according to the Internal Revenue Service may well have to be the deciding factor on the applications.

In a similar vein, **EHSB 1815** will likely make the cut. This bill allows for an exception to the requirement that an applicant for Current Use provide farm income for three of the five years preceding the application. If this bill passes, an applicant need only have the crop planted with an expectation of harvest within seven years. Attempts were made to amend the bill to make it clearer and not such an administrative headache, but those amendments were voted down by the Senate Committee. There are some legislators who now realize the bill is problematic, and will need to be fixed next session.

Still very much alive and waiting on the flight line is **SSB 5368**, Annual Revaluation. So far, no one has testified against this bill. All of the big acronyms, AWB, AWC, WSAC, and the Realtors have all testified for this bill. Even though everyone appears to like this bill it may still face some challenges. To understand, you have to break the bill into the four distinctive parts. One, achieve the goal of Annual Revaluation for all counties by a certain date. Certainly that goal is straight forward enough. Two, that DOR will perform advisory appraisals on all commercial industries where the real and personal property is valued at more than \$25 million. There again, pretty clear cut. Three, that this will be funded by the extension of an existing fee of \$5 on Real Estate Excise Affidavits. Notice again, clearly stated, and an existing fee, not a new fee. And, tied exactly to a specific purpose and paid for only by those who record such an Affidavit. Four, it establishes an ongoing computer maintenance account in each county for the Assessor and Treasurer, and to be used only for specific purposes.

The issue seems to revolve around the funding of the bill. While most would agree that is a simple extension of an existing fee for a specific purpose that is very narrowly defined, others seems to feel it is a “new” fee and is now subject to I-960 provisions. We can only hope that under I-960 the narrowly defined uses, the fact that only users pay the fee, and the clearly and narrowly defined use and scope of the money will prevail.

Courts, Public Safety, Law & Justice

Law and Justice Bills

SB 5013, clerks’ fee bill, is still in House Rules but hopefully will come out today, Friday, March 27. Clerks are still encouraged to contact House Rules Members and ask that **SB 5013** be “pulled.”

HJM 4000 Needs a Shove

HJM 4000 is a message to Congress that we want it to restore the partnership with local government by reinstating federal benefits to persons who are incarcerated but have not been tried or proven guilty. **HJM 4000** is in the Senate Rules Committee and needs a “pull.” Although many memorials are considered “letters to Santa,” this measure has the backing of the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National Sheriffs’ Association (NSA). All WACO members are encouraged to contact Senate Rules members and ask that **HJM 4000** be “pulled” to the Floor for a vote.

Mental Evaluation Bill Moves

SB 5519, mental evaluations in jails, was amended and moved out of the House Human Services Committee this week after most of the testimony agreed that this bill simply would not work outside King County. The committee amended the bill to apply to counties with populations over 1.5 million and extended the time for the evaluation to 48 hours.

The Reaper Gets Around

An interactive video developed by Franklin County Coroner Dan Blasdel to help teens make the right decision when it comes to drinking, driving, and bullying, among other issues, has drawn a lot of attention recently. “Beat the Reaper” was presented to the WACO Board two weeks ago and this week is featured in NACo’s CountyNews.

For more information about the “Beat the Reaper” CD, contact Don Blasdel at dblasdel@co.franklin.wa.us. CDs are available but sponsors are requesting a donation of \$5.00 to cover shipping and handling.

Elections, Licensing & Recordings

Archives Bill Needs a Hearing

HB 1374, the Local Government Archives Account, is still waiting for a hearing in the Senate Ways and Means Committee. **HB 1374** would restore \$4 million to the account from an appropriation made to the Heritage Center Account last session, and would repeal all future ability of the Heritage Center to tap the account. Archives programs, including the Digital Archives in Cheney, are at risk if **HB 1374** does not pass. Revenues to that account come from recorded documents in the Auditors' offices, and are down 30% from last year. All WACO members are encouraged to contact Ways and Means members and Senator Margarita Prentice, the Chair, to request a hearing on **HB 1374**.

Elections Cuts Heard

HB 2310, the Secretary of State's budget cuts to the Elections Division, was heard in House State Government and was less than popular, even with legislators. Kitsap County Auditor Walt Washington, and Thurston County Auditor Kim Wyman, president of the Washington State Association of County Auditors, objected to cost shifts to counties for printing costs and stated that some savings were not justified when the benefits of the programs being cut were weighed. The specific example was the Election and Certification Board, and committee members felt the same.

WACO objected to a role given the association in organizing county auditors to review appeals of denials of election certification and review of county elections staff and canvassing boards. WACO is a private non-profit organization and does not consider it a proper role to participate in a governmental review of some of its employers. Debbie Wilke, WACO Executive Director, asked that WACO be removed from the bill. Secretary of State Sam Reed has agreed. The Committee took no action on the bill Thursday.

Environment, Land Use & Resources

State to recommend water system improvement projects

\$38 million in economic stimulus funds on way to Washington

OLYMPIA – Today the Washington State Department of Health released a draft list of water system projects that it recommends for federal stimulus funds.

The department is overseeing more than \$38 million in federal economic stimulus money to be used for water system improvements such as covering or repairing reservoirs to keep water clean and building treatment facilities to improve water quality.

"It is vital that our state makes smart, quick decisions that put the federal stimulus money — and people in need of jobs — to work right away," Gov. Chris Gregoire said. "Safe drinking water is fundamental to our health. These projects will assure water quality and build our economy by putting people to work in some of our hardest-hit areas."

The department has published a list recommending funding for 27 projects in 16 counties. The proposed projects must still receive final approval from the state Public Works Board. Criteria for selection include an ability to start the project within 12 months, economic need and public health benefit.

The state received 347 applications for projects totaling nearly \$416 million, which is 10 times as much as the total available funding.

“While the \$38 million doesn’t cover the full need, it lets us give a boost to much-needed projects that have been held up due to lack of funding,” said Gregg Grunenfelder, assistant secretary for DOH. “Nearly all of the applications we received meet the criteria set by the federal government for this funding. That shows just how much this work is needed.”

Over the next two weeks, DOH will take public comment on the draft proposal list. Projects that can begin by June 16, 2009, receive first consideration. At least half of the funding won’t be repaid — these funds are for communities that cannot afford a loan.

DOH is accepting written comments until 5 p.m., April 6. The Public Works Board will meet April 7 to consider the list of recommended projects and provide final approval. To submit comments, send letters or e-mail to:

Kitty Weisman, Infrastructure Finance Lead
Washington State Department of Health
Office of Drinking Water
P.O. Box 47822
Olympia, WA 98504-7822
E-mail: kitty.weisman@doh.wa.gov

To see the draft list of ranked-order projects, visit: www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/our_main_pages/dwsrf.htm
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/our_main_pages/dwsrf.htm> .

Washington state is administering American Recovery and Reinvestment Act investments with an unprecedented level of transparency and accountability. Gov. Gregoire created a Web site, <http://www.recovery.wa.gov/> so every Washingtonian can see how tax dollars are spent and hold government accountable for results. On the federal level, President Obama has appointed Vice President Biden to oversee all states’ recovery efforts and to root out waste and fraud. This combined oversight will ensure taxpayer dollars are put to good use and recharge the economy.

Pacific Northwest Salmon Center Seeking Nominations for the 2009 Wild Salmon Hall of Fame Award

The purpose of the Wild Salmon Hall of Fame is:

“To honor and celebrate people who have demonstrated, over time, actions that have inspired and which continue to guide a passion for the preservation and recovery of abundant and diverse Wild Salmon populations throughout the Pacific Northwest. (Alaska, B.C., Washington, Oregon, California and Idaho)”

We are seeking nominations for the 7th annual Wild Salmon Hall of Fame award, with the winner to be announced on October 17 at a dinner celebration in Bremerton, Washington.

Individuals nominated for the award exemplify a dedicated, influential passion for Wild Salmon of the Pacific Northwest, as measured by specific criteria:

- *Demonstrates a passion for Wild Salmon in their career or volunteer work*
- *Enhances public knowledge and appreciation of Wild Salmon*
- *Creates a tangible, measurable outcome such as a book, artwork, event, or significant project*
- *Fosters a positive influence within his or her profession or the community*

The winner is chosen by a selection committee whose members are: Congressman Norm Dicks, Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council Chair Bill Ruckelshaus, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission Chair, Billy Frank Jr., and Oregon Dept of Fish and Wildlife Conservation and Recovery Program Manager, Charles Corrarino.

Nomination forms for the Wild Salmon Hall of Fame Award can be obtained by contacting Michelle Hori at 360-275-2763, or from our website at <http://www.pnwsalmoncenter.org/wshf.xml>.

[Read here about last year's finalists and award winners.](#)

Nominations are due by Friday, June 5th, 2009.

Earth Day Activities Website

The Washington Department of Ecology will post 2009 Earth Day/Week/Month activities on its website. If you are sponsoring such an event or know of one, please contact Michael Bergman at Ecology: mber461@ecy.wa.gov 360.407.6243

WEST COAST GOVERNORS'
AGREEMENT on **OCEAN HEALTH**
CALIFORNIA OREGON WASHINGTON



Notice of Opportunity

Opportunity for Six West Coast Communities to Receive Training in Community Planning and Development

Action 1.2 of the Action Plan for the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health (WCGA) includes the delivery of Coastal Community Planning and Development (CCPD) training to six West Coast communities, two each in Washington, Oregon, and California. This training, developed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), enables participants to understand, plan, and guide efforts to implement alternative growth and development approaches in their coastal communities. The training is most productive when attended by a broad spectrum of community members, such as local elected officials, developers, planners, community groups, and concerned citizens.

The WCGA Executive Committee is now identifying communities to receive the training.

Please see the attached summary for more information about the course objectives and intended audience. If you are interested in bringing the course to your community, please respond to this announcement by submitting a completed training request form, attached. Training requests are preferred by April 10, 2009.

The Executive Committee will work with WCGA staff, the Polluted Runoff Action Coordination Team, and NOAA's CCPD trainers to select six communities based on need, timing, and ability to host the course. Once selected, community representatives will work closely with NOAA to arrange and prepare for the training. Training is expected to take place after July 2009.

For more information, please contact Christina Hoffman, NOAA Coastal Services Center, Christina.Hoffman@noaa.gov or 510-251-8319.

For more information about the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health or to subscribe to the *WCGA Update*, please visit our Web site at westcoastoceans.gov.

General Government Issues

NACo Accepting Applications for County Courthouse Awards

NACo is now accepting County Courthouse Awards - sponsored by Siemens – to recognize innovative governance by county elected officials.

Awards are presented in three categories: rural, suburban and urban. Make sure your county official receives recognition. For information on the 2009 NACo County Courthouse Awards [click here](#). Award winners receive an engraved plaque, recognition at the NACo Annual Conference and a \$5,000 college scholarship to present to a graduating high school senior. Applications must be received by May 8, 2009. Contact: [Dalen Harris](#) · Phone: 202/942-4236 or [Erik Johnston](#) · Phone: 202/942-4230.

Cut-Off Dates

by James McMahan, WACO Staff

Cut-off dates are very important dates for those who live in the legislative world. Cut-off dates are administrative deadlines that the Legislature imposes on itself to control the number of bills that flow through the legislative process. There are seven cut-off dates in each legislative session. To be “alive” today, bills must have passed their chamber of origin (House bills must have passed the House, and Senate bills must have passed the Senate).

The following lists the remaining cut-off dates for the 2009 legislative session:

1. **Monday, March 30:** Bills must pass from policy committees in the opposite chamber (House bills must pass the Senate policy committee(s), and Senate bills must pass the House Policy Committees);
2. **Monday, April 6:** Bills must pass from fiscal committees in the opposite chamber (House bills must pass the Senate, Transportation, and/or Ways & Means Committee(s), and Senate bills must pass the House Finance, Transportation, Appropriations and/or Ways & Means Committee(s);
3. **Friday, April 17:** Bills must pass the opposite chamber (House bills must pass the Senate, and Senate bills must pass the House).

The 2009 Legislative Session ends on Sunday, April 26.

Bill Count

by James McMahan, WACO Staff

As of Thursday, March 26, there have been 2,531 bills introduced in the 74 days the 2009 Legislature has been in session. Of those, 1,361 are House bills and 1,170 are Senate bills. 359 Senate bills are still alive, and 435 House bills are still alive as of Friday.

House members are introducing bills at a rate of nearly 14 bills per Representative (there are 98 members in the House of Representatives). Senators are introducing bills at a rate of nearly 24 bills per Senator (there are only 49 Senators in the Senate).

Of the 2,531 bills introduced this session, 21 have passed the Legislature.

Transportation & Public Works

Gov. Gregoire announces certification for 138 transportation projects

OLYMPIA – Gov. Chris Gregoire today announced that she certified 138 transportation projects, which makes them ready to receive funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The state is expected to receive \$551 million dollars from the federal stimulus package to help pay for the certified projects.

“We promised that we would expedite the certification process, and now 138 transportation projects are ready to go,” Gregoire said. “Our partnership with the Obama administration is working smoothly as shown by how quickly we are getting the federal stimulus funding moving through our economy.”

Infrastructure project certifications enable the governor to confirm to the federal government that construction projects -- roads, water systems and others -- have received the review required by law and represent an appropriate investment of taxpayer dollars.

To learn more about these transportation projects, visit: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/funding/stimulus>.

Washington expects to receive more than \$4.5 billion from the federal stimulus package that will be used to modernize Washington's infrastructure, enhance energy independence, expand educational opportunities, increase access to health care and provide tax relief. The White House estimates the package will sustain or create nearly 75,000 jobs in Washington state.

In addition to the certification of the 138 transportation projects, the governor announced that the Federal Aviation Administration has provided stimulus funds to four Washington airports:

- o Bellingham International Airport (\$800,000)
- o Paine Field in Snohomish County (\$11.3 million)
- o Grant County International Airport in Moses Lake (\$2 million)
- o Pangborn in Wenatchee (\$1 million)

Gregoire also announced that \$38 million in economic stimulus funds will be distributed soon to make improvements to Washington's water systems. To see the list of projects under consideration, visit: http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/draft_list.pdf.

To date, the state has distributed approximately \$177 million of its federal economic stimulus money, most in Medicaid Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) funding.

Washington state is administering the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act investments with an unprecedented level of transparency and accountability. Gregoire created a new Web site, www.recovery.wa.gov <<http://www.recovery.wa.gov>>, so every Washingtonian can see where tax dollars are going and hold government accountable for the results. On the federal level, President Obama has appointed Vice President Biden to oversee all states' recovery efforts and to root out waste and fraud. This combined oversight will ensure taxpayer dollars are put to good use and recharge the economy.

Association News

NACo Legislative Report from WACO

The following report is submitted by WACO President Jefferson County Treasurer Judi Morris.

It was my honor and pleasure to represent the WACO Board at the most recent National Association of County Officials (NACO) conference in Washington, DC Friday March 6 through Wednesday March 11, 2009. My report on the event follows.

I appreciate the ability to represent WACO at this National conference for County Officials. The tone of the legislative conference is much more formal than the summer annual conference. The focus of legislative change permeates the sessions, exhibits and attendees. The proximity to our legislative and executive "heart" is not lost on these attendees.

Programs began Saturday morning at 8:00am. I attended the following sessions;
NACRS (National Association of County Recorders, Election Officials and Clerks) NACO's role in Legislative matters and Effective Legislation Representation for County Governments issues being addressed;

Automatic Audits on results, all paper ballots, tracking where ballots are sent (Post Office tried to refuse returns), avoiding federal presumptions or unfunded mandates, no "one-size-fits-all", the need for actual costs on all pending bills.

Public record requests were discussed. Stories about redacting social security numbers from two million documents were shared. The cost was five million dollars per year for one large county.

When approaching legislators we should change our focus. Instead of saying "we want this bill because..." We should say "We'd like to accomplish this for our constituents".

Economic Forecast by Bank of America points discussed;

On a positive note;

- Mortgage rates are improving,
- Fewer, but stronger lenders are in market, and
- Underwriter rules are tighter

On the negative side;

- Delinquencies at 8%,
- Foreclosures at 3.3% (California, Arizona, Nevada, Florida and Michigan are states hardest hit).
- Jobless rate at 8.1% (bad, but far from a depression rate)
- Mortgages are being written (BoA wrote \$29billion in January), only the deserving are getting loans.
- Most banks will pass this stress test. Bank's projection is for a mid 2009, into 2010 resurgence in mortgage transactions.

In Florida the foreclosures reached 30% and courts were buried in transactions. This has since leveled off. In Nebraska recordings for refinances and foreclosures became a cash cow (\$3.2/4.1M for the year).

We are coming off a record (and artificially inflated real estate high) in 2003. What we are seeing is partially a leveling process.

Some states have made recording completely electronic and the position is managed from home. Needed to make it work for all recording processes are E-Notary, E-Signatures and E- Mortgages. Realistically it will take 10- 15 years for all vendors and counties are ready.

At the NACCTFO (National Association of County Collectors, Treasurers and Finance Officers) presented *Innovations in Tax Collections & Making Tax Property Productive*.

- A new process has been established in Michigan establishing Land Banks. It shortens the foreclosure process, gives clear title, eliminates liens and lays the way for the county to renovate the property and sell it at a slight profit to low income buyers. In two years there were 26,000 properties affected, \$3.5 million invested, \$112 million in increased private value. (Handout 1)
- A pamphlet for citizens on housing was distributed. (Handout 2)
- The value of ACHs was touted as a method of tax payments. (This has been done in Washington for years.) One system was demonstrated that handles 2700 payments and posts in 10 minutes. (Handout 3)

Sunday The Agriculture and Rural Affairs Steering Committee met. Three legislative proposals were discussed;

- 1) Importing livestock from countries with confirmed BSE &/or Foot and Mouth disease.
- 2) Federal incentives to encourage agriculture to reduce greenhouse gases and opposition to a "livestock tax" and,
- 3) Support of the Rural Revitalization Act of 2009. (Handouts 4, 5, 6)

Next, in the Community and Economic Development Steering Committee Meeting Bruce Katz, Senior policy Advisor U.S. Housing and Urban Development spoke. The Recovery Act is aimed at job creation. The areas to watch are; senior homes, weatherization, school modifications, infrastructure (transportation, water, technology), energy, green housing. Priority is to stabilize low income housing. \$3B is allocated for public housing rehab; not demolition. CDBG formulas are being reviewed for updating. Projects will have 75 days to publish, 150 days to apply with funding in February 2010.

Ron Sims was introduced as the “probable” Deputy Director of HUD. He spoke eloquently about his plans for the agency and will solicit county and city input. He wants to establish a partnership with local entities. Section 8 will be revamped. Details of his plan are available at recovery.com (Handout 6)

Greg Brown, AVP National Association of Home Builders (Handout 8) predicted that 2009 is the bottom of the housing market. The fourth quarter will see a turn around. There will be an \$8K incentive for first time buyers, which can be used upfront as a down payment offset.

At the Information and Technology Committee Meeting three topics were covered.

- 1) Disaster Management interoperability reviewed the criticality of a shared communication system in the event of a disaster. When non-compatible and competing communication systems are in place no uniform message is possible. This adds to the chaos and prevents response and eventually recovery.
- 2) Next generation constituents and employees in the form of college and high school students discussed how they perceive technology in their daily lives. Being much savvier in that realm, they expect future employers to have the latest technology for the job functionality as well as their personal use while on the job. They also expect flexibility in job hours (as an example they expect to be told they must be at their work station from 10am to 3pm, but the flexibility to make their job day 7am to 3pm or 10am to 6pm should be left to them. It was clear that a culture shift is happening with the next generation of workers. Do we conform to their paradigm or mandate that they follow ours?
- 3) Election management Systems were discussed and new election initiatives throughout the states.

Monday *Weathering the Financial Storm; Ways to keep your County Afloat* was the first session of the day. The rural infrastructure as part of the economic recovery package was reviewed (Handouts 9, 10, 11), touching on shovel-ready projects, budget stresses on large counties, flood impacts, gas prices and county budgets and the economic impact on counties.

Then I shifted gears to hear about *Lowering Juvenile and Adult Recidivism through Federal Legislation*. The Youth Promise Act funds programs that create coordinated solutions reducing the impact of youth and gang- related crime and violence. Interesting statistics; one of every three black boys born today will go to prison. We need programs that direct youth to college and jobs, not gangs. Proven programs show for every \$1.00 spent, \$5.00 is saved in high crime areas. Large cities/areas can apply for \$10M for a four-year program that redirects offending youth from the typical arresting model to alternatives. Mental Health Services is crucial in this success. (Handouts 12, 13, 14, 15)

At the Opening Session of the legislative Conference, NACO President Don Stapley (Maricopa County Arizona Supervisor) covered association business and introduced his board. The guest speaker was Chuck Todd of NBC. Chuck shared his view of the first fifty days of the administration. He noted an interesting fact; seventy percent of what each President accomplishes in their term is done in the first nine months in office.

Tuesday four cabinet Secretaries spoke, HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, Energy Secretary Steven Chu and Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano. The synopsis of their comments is in the March 23, 2009 NACO County News issue. Being in DC affords the luxury of having cabinet members attend the conference and share their personal perspectives of their offices and the tasks ahead of them.

The mayor of Nashville invited all conference attendees to be in his fair city for the July NACO event.

We were entertained by the Capital Steps a satirical group with parities on contemporary political people, events and situations. They were very funny.

I also attended two educational sessions. *The Economy, Wall Street and Main Street- Impact on the Public and Counties*. Economist Bryan Jordan reiterated the same theme from both inside and outside the administration; economic improvement is coming. The overall impression is that 2009 will see housing and the economy in general hit bottom and begin a slow rise. Housing will not achieve the levels it rose to in 2003, but will recover.

Unemployment projections by the end of the year are 11% nationwide. Some of that will be regionalized, predicated on the industry mix of the area. Construction peaked in 2006, followed by consumer spending decreasing to historic levels. The United States is not in this alone. Global losses in construction are at \$1.2 trillion. At home we are seeing an \$8.2 billion decrease. That creates a credit problem for lending institutions, and credit dries up. The average European worker now has a 32 hour work week.

On a more positive note, the money supply is finally growing. The rates the banks charge banks are between 0.0%- 0.05% so they are borrowing short and lending long. The market will correct itself if allowed to do so.

The final session was *What's going on with the Immigration System?* Immigration is a political football. In the most recent election Latinos switched parties. In 2004 they reported 67% Republican versus 31% in 2008. This political clout sways policy. Secretary Napolitano committed to cut the immigration expenses of the Bush administration while still enforcing our laws. That means less enforcement on employers and employees. There are currently eleven million illegal immigrants outside the system. It is not feasible to send them all back to their countries of origin. This is a problem congress must solve.

Some solutions suggested;

- Employer verification programs; E-verification is now voluntary
- Amnesty program with consequences and earned citizenship
- Criminal filters established.
- Health care provided only for those in program (message is "if you are not legal; get legal")

If a successful plan had been implemented in 2006, \$50 billion more in taxes would have been collected. There could be a bill by September addressing this situation.

Many of these issues will be addressed at the annual conference in Nashville. I hand the "issues monitoring" baton to Barb Wagner, Mike Harum and James McMahan.

Respectfully submitted, Judi Morris WACO President
Handouts available through WACO office.

Update on WACO Legislative Package

by James McMahan, WACO Staff

Each year, the WACO membership produces a 'WACO Legislative Package' comprised of the highest priority legislation among each of the seven WACO affiliates. WACO staff prioritizes their time and attention during the legislative session advocating the contents of the WACO Legislative Package to the Legislature.

As of Thursday, March 26, the WACO Legislative Package stands as follows:

Service to the Public

- **Implement annual revaluation of real property in all counties of Washington by 2014.** HB 1056 died in the House Finance Committee. SB 5099 is now SB 5368. SB 5368 passed the House Finance Committee and will soon be referred to the House Rules Committee.
- **Improve ballot title information.** HB 1057 died in the House State Government Committee and SB 5098 died in the Senate Government Operations Committee.

Savings in Government

- **Reduce the number of spring special elections from four to two.** SB 5016 died on the Senate floor. HB 1018 passed the Senate Government Operations & Elections Committee and will soon be referred to the Senate Rules Committee.
- **Remove language requiring Auditors to send a ballot request form or official ballot to inactive voters prior to each election.** HB 1019 died in the House Rules Committee. SB 5017 passed the House State Government & Tribal Affairs Committee and has been referred to the House Rules Committee.
- **Apply the restriction against unfunded mandates to local governments to non-constitutionally mandated court rules.** SB 5240 died in the Senate Judiciary Committee.
- **Expand the court authority to enjoin harassing public records requests.** HB 1316 died in the House State Government Committee.
- **Urge members of the Washington State Congressional Delegation and the United States Congress to pass HR 5698, the Restoring the Partnership for County Health Care Costs Act of 2008.** HJR 4000 passed the Senate Human Services & Corrections Committee and has been referred to the House Rules Committee.

Better Government

- **Safeguard the Local Government Archives Records Account and repeal the authority granted in the State Capital Budget to transfer funds from the Account for support of the Washington State Heritage Center.** HB 1374 passed the House Rules and is awaiting a hearing in the Senate Ways & Means Committee.
- **Support the recommendations of the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) to develop possible legislation and policies that will most effectively increase the amount of funding provided to law enforcement for boating safety activities, emphasize the activities related to law enforcement, and increase the overall efficiency of the Boating Safety Program (BSP).** HB 1418 is now HB 2237. HB 2237 died in the House General Government Appropriations Committee. SB 5691 was heard in the House General Government Appropriations Committee on March 26 and must pass the committee by April 6.
- **Amend several statutes that were not revised with the passage of SB 5732, Chapter 105, 2007 Laws, which allows county treasurers to receipt property taxes paid before February 15, updates an archaic statute for the use of a “stamp” and amends statutes allowing for refunds of taxes.** HB 1208 passed the Senate Government Operations & Elections Committee and has been referred to the Senate Rules Committee.
- **Amend miscellaneous county clerk fees in order to make them consistent with the fee schedule passed by the Legislature in 2005, amend the language in the statute from “paper” to “document” to reflect court business which is transacted electronically, and clarify statutory authority.** SB 5013 passed the House Judiciary Committee and has been referred to the House Rules Committee.
- **Limit the responsibility of county clerks in certain actions and appropriately place it with the parties to the action by amending certain statutes: 1) direct the petitioner in an action to dissolve a public utility district to give notice of hearings; and 2) require the state, rather than the clerk, to publish notice of dependencies.** HB 1003 died in the House Judiciary Committee.

Reminder: WACO Legislative Committee

by James McMahan, WACO Staff

The WACO Legislative Committee meets every week during the legislative session. Unless otherwise announced, the Committee meets by conference call at 9:00 am each Tuesday. All WACO members are welcome and invited to participate. The Committee reviews recently introduced and active legislation related to any affiliate and considers requests for WACO to take a position or take action on legislation. The Committee also reviews the WACO Legislative Package and provides guidance to the WACO staff in that effort. Each WACO affiliate, time permitting, has an opportunity to review legislative action from their perspective.

Please contact WACO at (360) 753-7319 for the call in number and PIN.

Boards & Commissions

Commissioner Snyder Appointed to County Road Administration Board

At its March 19 meeting, the WSAC Board of Directors appointed newly elected Commissioner Dale Snyder of Douglas County to the County Road Administration Board. This seat represents counties with populations between 20,000 and 125,000.

Councilmember Dave Gossett, Snohomish County, was reappointed by Governor Chris Gregoire to the statewide Affordable Housing Advisory Board. He will serve a four year term representing counties on these issues.

Congratulations to Commissioner Snyder and Councilmember Gossett and thank you for your service!

Training & Upcoming Events

Washington Counties – [wacounties.org/Calendar of Events](http://wacounties.org/Calendar%20of%20Events)

County Training Institute – www.countytraininginstitute.org

Courthouse Ramblings

Condolences to Portmann Family

We are sad to have received the news that Snohomish County Assessor **Cindy Portmann**'s mother, Gloria Schumacker, age 83, passed away March 26. She had been trying to recover from a recent surgery, but things took a turn for the worse. Services will be at the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church April 2, in Snohomish, Washington. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to Cindy and her family during this sad time.



Mark Leander, Skagit County Assessor, to Resign

Skagit County Assessor **Mark Leander** announced his plan to resign from office on June 30, 2009. Leander submitted a letter to the Board of Skagit County Commissioners this morning.

"Since being diagnosed and undergoing treatment for cancer, it was my hope that my recovery would enable me to continue in this position at not only the level I expect of myself, but at the level the citizens of Skagit County deserve," said Leander. "It's become apparent that is not likely, so I will be relinquishing my position."

"No one has worked harder and maintained the integrity and fairness of property tax assessment more than Mark Leander during his very successful career in the Assessor's office," said Skagit County Commissioner Ken Dahlstedt.

Leander stated in his letter to the Commissioners that during his tenure the Assessor's Office has set statewide benchmarks for production and accuracy. "Those accomplishments would not have been possible without the dedicated and skilled staff that has carried on our vision, even during my health issues," said Leander.

Last year Leander served as President of Washington Association of County Officials (WACO).

When an elected official resigns, the political party to which the resigning official belongs nominates three persons to fill the vacancy, and passes the names of the individuals to the Board of County Commissioners. The Board shall appoint from the three persons nominated the individual who will fill the vacancy. The appointment must occur within 60 days or the authority to fill the vacancy passes to the Governor of the State of Washington. Leander is a Republican.

The person so nominated shall fill the position until the election of a successor in the 2010 general election.

For further information, contact:

Dan Berentson
Communications Director

Layoffs Create Potential County Employment Pool

Counties across the state are being forced to layoff personnel to balance budgets and are creating a huge pool of skilled, productive and capable individuals. If you are a county who is lucky enough to be filling vacancies, looking to other counties is a great way to successfully fill your need and to offset layoffs in other jurisdictions at the same time.

Thurston County Assessor Patricia Costello notified WACO this week of that she is losing several employees, effective April 30, who have various talents and skills in the Mass Appraisal environment. They are two senior appraisers and two senior office assistants.

The senior appraisers work with the Review & Appeals Team and are accustomed to presenting appeal cases effectively to the Board of Equalization and the State Board of Tax Appeals. They are experienced in appraisal theory and are good problem solvers and communicators. In addition to working with the Physical Inspection Team, they can accurately apply mass appraisal concepts and do a good job of coding property characteristics.

Some of the duties of the senior office assistants are working with the Customer Service Team to put a friendly face on government. They understand complex exemption programs and appreciate the importance of providing excellent customer service. They are energetic and capable organizers who are experienced in customer service. A senior office assistant also provides appraisal support to the office by entering sketches and permit data into Thurston County's tracking system.

If you have job openings that require any of these qualifications please contact Thurston County Assessor Patricia Costello.

Good Things



Columbia County Courthouse

Dayton, Columbia County--Engulfed in history

by Sharon Wootton & Maggie Savage, the Daily Olympian, 3/27/2009

Never underestimate the power of a small town to hold your interest. We love to stop in them because there always are surprises off of the beaten path.

Dayton, located northeast of Walla Walla on U.S. Highway 12, features the Green Giant, steel sculptures of the explorers in the Lewis and Clark expedition, the oldest train depot (1881) and the oldest continuously used courthouse (1887) in the state.

A giant is born

It was home to the world's largest asparagus cannery for about seven decades - including some marketed under the Green Giant label. Although the cannery moved its operation to Peru a few years ago, the Green Giant remains.

Driving into Dayton from the west, look at the mountain on your left: For 20-odd years, a farmer fertilized a 300-foot-long, 40-foot-wide Green Giant, which then would grow green.

In 1991, residents created a more durable arrangement by outlining the giant with colored patio bricks.

Sculpture camping only

Driving into Dayton from the north, take Patit Creek Road for about 2 1/2 miles to the Patit Creek Campsite. But the only camping allowed there is by the Corps of Discovery, represented by dozens of life-size metal silhouettes shown camping with gear and horses May 2, 1806. The silhouettes were created by local residents and include three American Indians trading with the party. A plaque gives a number, name and job to every figure.

When we were there, Glen Greenway of College Place was admiring the exhibit. His great-great-great-grandfather, Private William E. Bratton (blacksmith, gunsmith, plant forager), was depicted resting his bad back.

Getting into town

When you reach Main Street, picture it as a dirt track for tribal horse races. In 1859, cattle ranchers started homesteading, then giving way to grain farmers and loggers. An 18-mile-long flume brought logs from the Blue Mountains to the town mill.

Dayton was wide-open to bad behavior from 1876-78 with 15 saloons, gambling and its share of outlaws before law and order came to town.

Today, the major attraction is the Dayton Depot, abandoned in 1971 and now a museum. The day we visited, its visitor log included names from Texas, Philadelphia and France.

"They come to see the heartbeat of Dayton," said former depot manager Frances Ford, who had an excellent handle on Dayton's history.

Before the railroad, grain was shipped overland to Walla Walla, then by rail and boat to Portland. The railroad changed everything.

In 1899, the depot was moved about one-third of a mile to its current location just off Main Street. It took more than a month to reach its new home using roller logs, horses and a capstan.

One exhibit is the ticket office, which contains a typewriter used in 1897 at the post office - probably one of the first typewriters in Columbia County - as well as an original train departure board that hung in a local hotel. Revolving exhibits and the station master's apartment are upstairs. Admission is \$5.

"Right across the street is the oldest working courthouse in the state," Ford said. "It's also been restored. Dayton is engulfed in history."

Other highlights

Weinhard Hotel (1889): Built to house a saloon by Jacob Weinhard, the nephew of brewer Henry Weinhard, the inn has 19th-century antiques, the original heavy doors and moldings, 15 guest rooms with 14-foot ceilings and a terraced garden on the roof. By 1904, Weinhard owned a brewery, malt house, theater and bank.

Weinhard's Cafe: In a separate building, the cafe includes the original brick walls, high ceilings, wood floors - and it offers Italian fare Tuesday through Saturday.

Dingle's: Bert Dingle's family owned the store from 1920 to 2004. It's one of those step-back-in-time stores with an assortment that stretches from everyday needs to a few items that defy recognition, from nuts and bolts to Teddy bears. The store's motto: "If you don't find it at Dingle's, you don't need it!"

Elk Drug Store: Order sodas and milkshakes at the old-fashioned soda fountain.

Palus Artifact Museum: The Palus, the original name for the Palouse tribe, was the prominent tribe in the area. Started in 1991 with one family's large collection of artifacts, visitors can see arrow and spear points, a native plants exhibit, a mural of Palouse Falls, basketry, beadwork and other artifacts.

Attachments

Welcome to the U.S. Communities Purchasing & Finance Agency

(U.S. Communities) website <http://www.uscommunities.org/>

The Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO), the National Association of Counties (NACo), the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP), the National League of Cities (NLC), and the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM), jointly sponsor the

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