

the Courthouse Journal

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

December 17, 2009

Issue No. 32

*Inside the
Courthouse Journal*

WACO Spotlight
Page 2

Budget, Finance & Taxes
Pages 3-6

Environment, Land Use
& Resources
Pages 7-8

Association News
Pages 8-12

General Government
Page 12

Boards & Commissions
Pages 12-13

Attachments
Page 14

*Washington Association of County Officials
Washington State Association of Counties*

Season's Greetings from the Washington Counties Building!



Santa and his missus have been seen in Jefferson County! Any resemblance to Jefferson County Treasurer Judi Morris and her husband Milt is purely coincidental...(well, maybe)

**Season's Greetings from the Washington Counties Building
and all our staff.**

**We hope the New Year will bring an abundance of blessings
to you and yours!**

the Courthouse Journal

Published weekly (during Legislative Session)
and Bi-weekly (other than Session) by the

Washington Association of County Officials

(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

WACO - (360) 753-7319 / Fax (360) 664-2812

Debbie Wilke, Executive Director

James McMahan, Deputy Director

Robin Chase, Financial Operations Manager

Bob Carlton, Research Associate

Kathleen Houts, Administrative Assistant

WSAC - (360) 753-1886 / Fax (360) 753-2842

Eric Johnson, Executive Director

Policy

Scott Merriman, Deputy Director

Rashi Gupta, Policy Director

Josh Weiss, General Counsel/Policy Director

Brian Enslow, Policy Director

Brad Banks, Policy Analyst

Linda Powell, WSALPHO Admin Assistant

Operations – Finance & Technology

Karlynn Shannon, Finance Director

Barbara Warden, Finance Specialist

Justin Kerrihard, Technology Manager

Operations – Member Services

Michelle L. Nelson, Communications/Member
Svc Director

Sarah Bright, Member Services Coordinator

Beth Dubey, Member Services Assistant

Program Contractors

Neil Aaland, Columbia River Basin Project &
Puget Sound Partnership

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

WACO Spotlight

Grays Harbor County Treasurer Ron Strabbing

It was July of Nineteen Hundred and Eighty One when I first walked into the office of the County Treasurer as a newly elected official. Well, yes, I was elected – and by a one vote margin. It was a 2 -1 vote at the Board of County Commissioners that got me started. Thank goodness I've had better election results since then. The office was on the second floor of the relatively new (1971) Administration Building. Back in those days the Admin building had 2 ½ floors. 2 ½ floors you say? Let me explain, it took two ballots to get this new building approved by the voters. So, concessions had to be made. What the Commissioners really wanted was a three story building. Being the creative folks that they are, the Commissioner built a three story building – it just didn't have a first floor, only a glassed in elevator lobby. The rest of the first floor was just an open area with a concrete floor. Kinda' like a giant covered patio. By the time I came along, they had found enough money to 'finish' one half of the patio – it was turned into the Commissioners' office and meeting room. Later they made it a real three story building – they finished the other half and gave it to the Auditor.

When I walked in that day I was met with sixteen skeptical employees – “who was this young punk?” I am pleased to say we all got to know each other and have gotten along quite well, thank you.

Oh, something else happened in 1981 – a little company called International Business Machines introduced its first personal computer. I just checked around the office – we have 11 of those personal computers. And, after the most recent budget cuts, I count only five employees. What does that tell you? Well, that was then – this is now. Let's just say that it's good we all get along. We've all aged a bit and our hair (on at least some of us) has gotten a bit grayer. And, I'd have to say we're a pretty close knit little group. We love what we do and it shows.

Sometimes you would think the taxpayers don't appreciate us, but you'd be surprised. It's our job to collect the revenues that keep their government running. And, yes, that means we collect taxes from everybody. But, that's not a bad thing – although some may disagree. Still, they are our friends and neighbors so we try to treat them the way we want to be treated. We talk to them - sometimes we laugh with them, sometimes we sympathize with them, and, well, sometimes we just get frustrated with them. It just works that way. Over the years, though, I think we've built up a good rapport with the citizens as a whole. In the end, that's probably more important than anything else we could do.

Legislative Committee Schedules and Agendas:

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

Bill Information: www.leg.wa.gov

The How and Why of Property Tax, Installment #3

by Bob Carlton, WACO Staff

This paper on the history of property tax was initially delivered at the IAAO Conference on Assessment Administration in Boston, Massachusetts. These are the same good folks that help to establish sound appraisal practices that are in use and implemented throughout the world.

Many thanks to the author of this article Richard Carlson. This is without a doubt the best synopsis and factual gathering of Property Tax History that I have ever encountered. This is the third and final installment of Richard Carlson's article. You will recall, the first installment took us up through Roman times, and in many ways laid the basic groundwork for property tax. This second article started with Medieval Times, and showed the growth in application toward public and city "safety" through the use of property tax. I also introduced you to two excellent fiction books by Ken Follett, "Pillars of the Earth" and "World Without End," that made excellent companion reading for the medieval period. Now, the 1% Limit has evolved, and more taxes were put toward city and town improvements to make them more palatable to the taxpayer. You've met Lady Godiva, and now you will meet the first property tax lawyer. Welcome to the "Early United States" and property tax.

Early United States

During the Revolution, the colonies agreed to raise taxes (mostly through property, except in the south where the tax system was more dependent on poll taxes) by state quotas. This system did not work well; in fact, states did not meet their quotas. As a result the Continental Congress spent far more cash than it had; the money was borrowed and not paid off until 1834.

But in this world nothing is certain but death and taxes. ~ Benjamin Franklin

During the debate for the U.S. constitution, delegates grappled with the revenue issue. Advocates pushed for a national property tax, but because of the interest of the large estates of the southerners, no agreement could be reached. The tax clause in the constitution (the same clause that apportions representatives) states that all direct taxes (as opposed to indirect taxes like tariffs) should be apportioned among the states according to population. Ultimately, the primary sources of federal government revenue for the Civil War were tariffs and sales of public land.

There were attempts to implement national taxes with quotas apportioned among the states by population. There were two primary camps after the revolution: the Alexander Hamilton camp that thought there should be a larger central government with greater revenue raising capacity and the Jefferson camp that thought revenue should be raised locally because it more suits a democracy. The first camp also argued that the country should push for industrial development, while the latter pushed for a more agrarian society to foster independence and democracy. Hamilton was the first Secretary of the Treasury of the United States. He was a financial genius for the country, helping create the foundation of the capitalist system that we have here today; however, the issue of taxation turned into a disaster for him and his party.

The Washington and Adams Administrations attempted to implement various national taxes that created rebellions such as the Whiskey Rebellion and the Fries Rebellion. In 1797, John Adams was greatly concerned that war with France was imminent. He required revenue to pay for a force to resist the French. Congress enacted a national property tax apportioned by population. Two million dollars was to be raised with Pennsylvania's share at \$237,000. The tax became known as the window tax because assessors were to assess real estate according to the number and size of windows and doors of each house in addition to a land tax. The German settlers of Pennsylvania were outraged because it reminded them of the much hated hearth tax in Germany. John Fries became the leader of the tax protesters. Small bands were formed to search for federal assessors who were coming to count and measure windows. These bands intimidated, beat

up and ran assessors off to the county line. In one case three assessors were captured and brought to Enoch Roberts Tavern and held for some time. Their papers were destroyed. The sheriff went with thirteen or fourteen men to the Inn to arrest the responsible parties. He captured nineteen men and held them at the Inn when a party of 400 men came to try to rescue prisoners. John Fries negotiated the release of the assessors' kidnappers. The sheriff sent word to President Adams, who rallied troops to arrest the parties involved. John Fries was captured and convicted of various charges including hindering assessors in their duties. He was sentenced to death. There was much consternation regarding his sentence, and the governor was pressured to repeal the sentence and release him. At the last minute Fries was pardoned due to irregularities at the trial. The tax was repealed.

Another early rebellion took place in Massachusetts resulting from excessive property taxes and court rulings on farmers' debts. Daniel Shays, a former Revolutionary War captain, led the armed rebellion. His group took over a courthouse and demanded lower property taxes along with more protection for farmers from foreclosure and "sound money" policies. In the end, the rebellion was put down by Federal troops. There were death sentences issued, but they were commuted.

Death and taxes may be inevitable, but they shouldn't be related. ~ J. C. Watts, Jr.

Throughout the nineteenth century, most state and local governments raised their revenue through the property tax, though the south continued extensive use of poll taxes with some property taxes. Most state constitutions required uniformity of taxation. The administration of taxes came primarily through the sheriff's office where the sheriff continued to be law enforcer, tax assessor and collector. One finds that the more rural and further west you went in the United States, the more recent the separation of law enforcement and financial responsibilities. Most of the western and rural states did not separate the role of sheriff from that of financial officer until the late 1800's.

Wyatt Earp moved to Tombstone Arizona in the late 1870's. He was the most famous lawman in the country, but he retired and went to Arizona to make his fortune. Once there, he became engaged in town politics. His brother Virgil became chief of police to help protect the brothers' financial interests. Wyatt signed on as deputy sheriff to supplement his income as owner of a gambling concession in a saloon. While it is well known that the shoot-out at the OK corral took place in 1881, few people know that Wyatt ran for the office of sheriff. In Tombstone, as elsewhere in the rural west, the sheriff was both law enforcement officer and tax assessor/collector, as was Wyatt Earp's opponent, incumbent Sheriff Johnny Behan. Compared to Behan, who might be called a cowboy Democrat by modern standards, the Earp brothers were urbanized Republicans. Due in part to the financial officer's unchecked power in Tombstone, Wyatt Earp was unable to defeat Behan.

Before becoming U.S. President, Abraham Lincoln was a general attorney, whose responsibilities included trying murder cases, preparing estates and wills, and even representing property taxpayers in the Illinois courts. Yes, Lincoln was actually a property tax attorney: a tax rep. There were three famous cases that he tried:

1. The owner of a ferryboat moved his boat out of its assessing jurisdiction on the lien date. The assessor taxed the boat at a normal assessment and Lincoln appealed the case in court, arguing that the boat was not in the jurisdiction of the assessor on the lien date. He won the case.
2. Another case was a valuation issue for The Illinois Central Railroad. The railroad was under construction and approximately half complete on the lien date. Lincoln contended that the property was assessed as though the work was completed, but that the assessment should have reflected its true value as half constructed. He won this case for the biggest legal fee of his life: \$5,000.
3. He tried another railroad case on an exemption issue and won that case also.

Twentieth Century

By the end of the 1900's, it was widely felt that the tax system in the United States could not equitably tax the complicated economy. There were various reform movements to implement sales and income taxes and reduce reliance on property

taxes. Part of this reform effort intended to narrow personal property taxes especially for homeowners and intangible assets. Presidents Cleveland, McKinley, T. Roosevelt, Wilson and others began to push for lower property taxes and the implementation of sales and income taxes. State by state things changed, and by 1913 the sixteenth amendment was passed allowing for direct taxes without apportionment and income taxes.

By the time of the Great Depression, people's incomes began to drop. With so many unemployed, the property tax collection rates dropped. The result was fiscal reform throughout the country. Many states began to implement sales taxes and cut property taxes. This is the period during which many homestead exemptions were created. In 1932 and 1933, sixteen states also implemented property tax limitation laws.

What is the difference between a taxidermist and a tax assessor? A taxidermist takes only your skin. ~ Mark Twain

Two other reasons for such major reform were the institution of prohibition and the booming 1920's economy. Alcohol tax revenues from licenses and taxes (formerly a major source of revenue) declined to nothing for cities, states, and the federal government. This loss combined with added expenses on enforcing the new law. Personal incomes, meanwhile, were rising, and property taxes didn't seem overwhelmingly burdensome. Income taxes, which had stayed low and affected few people until World War II, nearly doubled as a percentage of one's income from 11.6% in 1929 to 21.1% in 1932. On the local level, property taxes doubled from 5.4% of people's income in 1929 to 11.7% in 1932. The tax delinquency rate rose to over 30%. The rate in some areas, especially rural communities, was much higher.

In 1933, prohibition ended, greatly increasing revenue at all governmental levels. In 1932, the federal government collected no liquor tax revenue. In 1934, \$259 million was collected, and in 1939, \$624 million was collected. The tax rate was 100%. Despite the high tax, prices of alcohol came down significantly.

Hundreds of taxpayer groups formed across the country to address and demand real tax reform. In 1934, the National Association of Assessing Officers was created and eventually become the International Association of Assessing Officers.

Some of the major tax reforms of the first half of the century:

- Narrowly defined personal property taxes on citizens and almost complete elimination of intangible property taxation;
- Creation of various exemptions for sick, aged, poor, farms, homesteads;
- Creation of circuit breakers was to limit the percentage of one's income going to property tax;
- Creation of property tax limitations in a large number of states.

After World War II, the economy grew at significant rates along with people's incomes and total property tax collections. However, property taxes as a percentage of total revenue began to drop. More notably, as a source of state revenue, property taxes were supplanted by sales and income taxes. Even at the local level, property taxes as a percentage of total tax revenue declined as cities began adopting sales and income taxes. In 1927, property taxes accounted for 97.3% of total local tax revenue; today the total is less than 75%.

The wisdom of man never yet contrived a system of taxation that would operate with perfect equality. ~ Andrew Jackson

During the 1970's, states that had not implemented property tax limits came under increasing pressure from referendum votes and court cases. On June 7, 1978, Proposition 13 passed in California, limiting the assessment to current value plus 2% per year. When the property sold or was newly constructed, the assessment process began again with the new sale price.

Massachusetts after years of taxpayers' complaints and failed attempts to lower property taxes:

- implemented state sales tax and distributed revenue to cities and towns in 1967;
- implemented a state lottery to distribute revenue to relieve property tax pressure in 1971;
- increased state income and sales taxes for revenue sharing in 1975.

Property taxes still did not decline and during the same time period, Massachusetts courts made the following decisions:

- Springfield mandated 100% valuation in 1961.
- Sudbury mandated the predecessor of the Department of Revenue to enforce 100% standard in 1974.
- The classification amendment enabled cities and towns to tax commercial, industrial and personal property at a higher rate than residential property to avoid a massive tax shift.
- The Tregor decision cost Boston tens of millions of dollars in abatements when it lost a disproportionate assessing case.

Finally on November 4, 1978, Proposition 2½ passed, severely limiting the amount and growth of property taxes.

The past thirty years have led to advances in assessing practices through the use of statistics, cadastral maps, advances in technology and various refinements of old ideas.

Conclusion

Gross inequalities may not be ignored for the sake of ease of tax collection. ~ Owen J. Roberts

Since the beginning of civilization property taxes have been a major source of revenue for most governments. Oliver Wendell Holmes said “Taxes are what we pay for a civilized society.” There have been good taxation policies created by admirable assessors like Aristides the Just and disastrous ones invented by corrupt leaders such as the latter Roman emperors. While modern assessors are mandated to develop more fair and accurate assessments than most of our predecessors, the pressure to have a fair tax system has always existed. It is not enough to have an equitable tax system; the taxpayers need to understand that they are paying their fair share. The tools at our disposal, combined with advances in methodology and the lessons of the past have put us in a more favorable position to make intelligent decisions. Our everyday decisions have significant consequences on residential and commercial taxpayers. We need to have a balanced view that considers our obligations to both the taxpayers and their jurisdictions. People make the difference in making the system better or worse. Those people are us. It is up to us to think, work hard, be prospective, anticipate problems, and come up with creative solutions to those problems. The best means to develop an understanding of improvements in assessing is to pursue education. Take classes through the IAAO and other appraisal and assessing groups. Learn from each other when opportunities such as conferences present themselves. Most importantly, perhaps, learn and prioritize the responsibilities within your own jobs. You may come up with answers to complicated issues if you try. Strive to become the modern day Aristides.

No government can exist without taxation. This money must necessarily be levied on the people; and the grand art consists of levying so as not to oppress. ~ Frederick the Great

Environment, Land Use & Resources

Review a Draft Technical Report of the Biodiversity Scorecard

The Council welcomes your review of this [draft technical report](#) about a tool to assess the status of Washington's biodiversity. The Council contracted with researchers at the University of Washington to frame a "biodiversity scorecard" that will help Washingtonians track how the state's biodiversity is doing. A [summary presentation](#) is also available.

The draft technical report is not yet designed for general audiences, but is a working document that describes proposed indicators and metrics. It also describes the purpose and scope of the tool, the process for compiling and selecting indicators, a proof-of-concept application to mesic forests of western Washington, and it provides some suggested approaches to aggregating measures.

A cover letter included with the draft report suggests guidelines for review. Feedback will be most helpful to the contractor by December 18, but the Council will be continuing to refine this tool and welcomes comments after that date as well.

While this stage of review is focused on the construction of the indicators, **please feel free to offer feedback on the potential uses and usefulness of the tool as well.** We are interested to know what uses you might be able to make of biodiversity assessment tool of this type. How would knowing Washington's biodiversity "score" inform your activities?

We are hosting a web meeting about the project on Tuesday, December 8th, 1:30-3:00. Space is limited; please register at info@biodiversity.wa.gov

You may also email comments to info@biodiversity.wa.gov or contact Lynn Helbrecht at 360-902-2087.

Biodiversity Council Meeting

The next meeting of the Biodiversity Council will be **Wednesday, January 20, 2010**, starting at 8:45 a.m., in room 175, Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street SE, Olympia. [Directions](#). The agenda is under development and will be sent prior to the meeting.

Washington Biodiversity Council meetings are open to the public, in locations accessible to people with disabilities. Arrangements for individuals with hearing or visual impairments can be provided by contacting us by January 15, 2010, at 360/902-3000 or TDD 360/902-1996

Highlights of the October 6-7, 2009 meeting

- The Council provided direction for its response to the Governor's Natural Resource Reform Initiative.
- Rufus Woods, publisher of the Wenatchee World, spoke at the Council's evening session about what can be accomplished when willing minds come together to make important community efforts happen.
- Nancy Warner and other members of the Initiative for Rural Innovation and Stewardship presented [findings and recommendations from their Council-funded project](#).
- The Council learned about progress on developing the [Biodiversity Scorecard](#) and provided feedback. It approved project funding of \$10,000 for additional work on the scorecard.
- The Council approved project funding of \$10,000 to the Land Use and Local Government working group to create a partnership on biodiversity and land use planning that will provide a focal point for existing efforts; guide collection and dissemination/delivery of resources; and act a springboard for addressing further needs.
- Bill Robinson, of Robinson Research, Spokane, and contractor to the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group (a recipient of Council funds) presented [results from stakeholder interviews and focus groups](#) about wildlife habitat connectivity.

Planning Near Pipelines –Valuable Land-Use Planning Tools Are Now On-line

With the launch of a web page called Planning Near Pipelines, there is now available in one place a wide range of resources so that development proposed for lands near large gas and oil pipelines can be carried out with the least risk to both the public and the pipelines.

On-line at <http://mrsc.org/subjects/pubsafe/transpipes.aspx>, Planning Near Pipelines is an important source of information for local government officials, land use planners, developers, pipeline operators, attorneys, emergency responders, and other stakeholders. Here is where to learn about good land use practices that can be put in place before residential, commercial, or public development is considered for an area where a large pipeline already exists.

This web page is just one component of a federally-funded project awarded to the Association of Washington Cities (AWC) and its partners to improve land use planning practices near pipelines. Over the next year, local governments in Washington State will be able to obtain free technical assistance to help them understand and implement these practices. The project will also include publication of electronic newsletters, the hosting of an on-line discussion group, and presentations to Washington State stakeholder organizations.

Among the on-line resources are a series of practical and optional steps—Recommended Practices—that local governments, developers, pipeline operators and others should consider before proposals to develop land near pipelines are drawn up. These Recommended Practices, which were developed by the Pipelines and Informed Planning Alliance (PIPA), are in the final stages of adoption. PIPA is a task force of stakeholders brought together by the federal government from across the nation to help rapidly-growing communities resolve land use issues as they expand into areas that were sparsely populated when large gas and oil pipelines were built.

Other resources available on the Planning Near Pipelines web page include sample ordinances for implementing some of the Recommended Practices, as well as on-line links to laws, regulations, organizations, and governmental agencies involved with pipeline safety and land use planning.

Although free technical assistance is available only to Washington State local governments, everyone is encouraged to subscribe to the electronic newsletter or join the on-line discussion group. For further information about the grant activities, contact these grant partners: Municipal Research and Services Center (jdohererty@mrsc.org) or the Pipeline Safety Trust (info@pstrust.org).

In addition to MRSC and PST, other AWC project partners are the Northwest Gas Association, the Washington State Association of Counties, the Washington State Citizens' Committee on Pipeline Safety, and the Washington State Utilities and Transportation Commission.

Association News

Bobbie Gagner: Excellent Public Servant Retires

From the Tri-City Herald

Bobbie Gagner has excelled as a public servant, and like a lot of folks around here, we are sorry to see her go. The longtime Benton County auditor retires at the year's end.

There will be two parties and open houses for her today, one at the Kennewick Annex from 9 to 11 a.m. and another at the Courthouse in Prosser from 3 to 5 p.m. They ought to be big affairs. Gagner's been with the county for 34 years, more than 20 of them as auditor.

She has a spotless record and is recognized around the state as a model of how the auditor's job(s) should be done. That parenthetic (s) carries a world of meaning. Gagner is Benton County's top recording and licensing, financial services, vehicle titling and election department officer.

The election department alone is a handful. Keeping two political parties (she's been a member of both, by the way) content is tough enough. Factor in delivering timely election returns to frantic questioning by reporters for radio, television and newspapers, whose assignment editors sit back at the office demanding ever-faster results, and you have the definition of a high-stress job.

She made it look easy, and it always seemed to go smoothly. The same can be said of the transition of the title of auditor from Gagner to her successor, Brenda Chilton, Benton County's chief deputy auditor. Gagner is pleased with the choice.

Chilton takes over from Gagner after the first of the year but will face an election campaign within months of taking office.

Gagner said the auditor position is not a job "you can walk into without having some sort of background," in explaining to reporters why she was supporting Chilton.

"Have I been grooming (Chilton) for the position? Yes," Gagner said. "From the time she's been my chief deputy, I've talked to her about how somebody needs to take over when I retire." She added: "Although I'd like to think I'll be sorely missed in this office, there's an excellent, excellent staff here," she said.

She'd be in a position to know, and not just from the top job looking down. Benton Commissioner Leo Bowman made the point nicely not very long ago. He said that Gagner was an elected official who "worked the counter." In other words, citizens were as likely to get her as anyone else when they went to the auditor's office for routine as well as not-so-routine business.

"That's very unusual in an office as large as hers with a staff as large as hers," Bowman said. "It tells a lot to your staff and your constituents." She was, for us at the Herald, a ready reference on all kinds of questions on local or statewide issues. By "ready" we mean that she was always knowledgeable, always cooperative and mindful that the media are always in a hurry.

The new auditor has a challenge to live up to, but she also has a ready model of how the job should be done. And she has the endorsement and support of the woman she is following in that office.

Benton citizens should consider themselves doubly fortunate.

Island County Clerk Sharon Franzen Retires

Our best wishes to outgoing Island County Clerk Sharon Franzen who retired December 15, 2009, after seven years in office.



Outgoing Island County Clerk Sharon Franzen greets newly appointed Patricia Terry

Snohomish County Names Interim Prosecutor

By Lynn Thompson, Seattle Times Snohomish County reporter

The Snohomish County Council on Wednesday named veteran attorney Mark Roe to be interim prosecuting attorney, citing his 22-year experience as a senior deputy prosecutor and the need for continuity in the office.

A packed council hearing room greeted the decision with applause.

Roe, who was sworn in shortly after the vote, vowed to bring efficiencies to the prosecutor's office, including reducing paperwork, while keeping the current staff and organization largely intact.

"I want to reassure everybody that although we're going in some different directions, we've got exactly the right people to do it," he said.

Roe will fill out the term left vacant by the Nov. 30 departure of Janice Ellis, who stepped down with a year remaining in her term to take a job with the Tulalip Tribes.

In a 3-2 council vote, Roe edged out Seattle assistant attorney Jim Kenny and former Snohomish County civil deputy attorney Millie Judge. Judge had endorsed Roe and asked the Democratic Party, which forwarded the three names to the council, that she not be considered. Councilmen Dave Somers, Brian Sullivan and John Koster supported Roe. Mike Cooper and Dave Gossett voted for Kenny.

Both Roe and Kenny announced that they will run for Prosecuting Attorney next year. The County Council interviewed all three candidates in open session Wednesday. Kenny pointed to his experience as a fire-district commissioner and said he would bring ideas from his 10 years in the Seattle City Attorney's office, most recently as a community prosecutor working with the police department.

Roe told the council that during his 22 years in the county prosecutor's office, he had earned the trust of law enforcement and crime victims. He also suggested a mental-health court so nonviolent offenders could be treated rather than jailed, an idea first raised by Kenny.

Bill Burkheimer, whose 18-year-old daughter Rachel was murdered in 2002, attended the hearing wearing a Mark Roe button. Burkheimer said that although Roe didn't prosecute his daughter's case, he was there for the family "almost daily."

"Mark has the IQ to manage the office, but he also has the EQ — the emotional quotient — to bond that department," Burkheimer said after the council vote.

New County Auditor Appointed

by Michelle McNeil, Wenatchee World, 11/23/2009

Chelan County commissioners Monday made Skip Moore the Chelan County Auditor.

Moore served as chief deputy auditor until Auditor Evelyn Arnold resigned last month to take a new job in King County. He then served as acting auditor until Monday.

If he wants to keep the job, Moore will have to run for the office during next year's election. As one of his first duties, Moore will have to certify the November general election today. In the election, he was re-elected to a second term as a Cashmere city councilman. He ran unopposed and received 100 percent of the vote.

Moore said typically the auditor, who serves on the three-member county canvassing board that certifies elections, will recuse themselves from certifying elections when they are up for re-election. But Moore said he does not believe it would be a conflict for him to certify his own election to the Cashmere City Council.

He plans to continue serving on the council unless it starts to conflict with his job as auditor, he said. Moore said he does not plan to fill the deputy auditor position that he is leaving, a move that will avoid layoffs in his department in the latest round of county budget cuts.

Prosecutors' Association Meets

The Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (WAPA) met for their annual winter conference at the Crown Plaza in Seattle, December 10-11. New officers were elected at the meeting and will take office January 1, 2010. They are: President, Steven M. Clem, Douglas County; Vice President, Juelie Dalzell, Jefferson County; Secretary, Steve M. Lowe, Franklin County; and Treasurer, Susan J. Baur, Cowlitz County.

Apply online for NACo's 2010 Achievement Awards

Applications for NACo's 2010 Achievement Award program are now available. The annual program is non-competitive and recognizes innovative county government programs. Each submission is judged on its own merits based on the criteria outlined in the application information.

NACo is introducing a new application process this year that requires that part of the application to be completed online. Contact information and the title and category of the program must be submitted through NACo's Web site. Payment by credit card can also be made online, but checks and purchase orders may still be mailed. The program narrative and any supplemental materials must still be mailed along with the e-mailed confirmation page that is generated with your online registration. All applications and materials must be postmarked by Feb. 12, 2010.

Last year, more than 770 applications were submitted from 123 counties in 30 states.

In these tough times, the Achievement Award program provides a way for counties to recognize not only innovative programs, but also the dedicated employees who make these programs successful. "Counties and their employees are demonstrating continued resilience during these difficult economic times," said Jacqueline Byers, NACo director of research. "This program provides a way to recognize and reward these employees for their hard work."

Since its inception in 1970, the Achievement Award Program has honored thousands of county government initiatives that have improved service delivery, achieved greater cost efficiency, provided better customer service and helped to develop a better-trained work force.

For more information and for the 2010 application information, please visit www.naco.org/achievementawards.

NACo-Nationwide Scholarship Open Now to High School Seniors

This spring, four high school seniors will earn \$2,000 for college from the NACo-Nationwide Scholarship. Winning applicants will have written a short essay describing why it's important for a public-sector employee to start saving early for retirement.

This is the fifth consecutive year that Nationwide and NACo have teamed up to encourage high-school seniors to think about retirement.

Why spur students who haven't even started full-time work to think about retirement? Three reasons — by applying for the scholarship the students: must consider the financial impact of their decisions about college and their career, and realize it is never too soon to start thinking about saving for retirement

begin to recognize the value perspective in turbulent financial times when difficult decisions often are required, and identify specific actions that help prepare for a financially successful future.

To be eligible, applicants must be graduating high school seniors who are legal U.S. residents and their parent or grandparent must be enrolled in and contributing to the NACo 457 Deferred Compensation Plan. In addition, the student must enroll in a full-time undergraduate course of study no later than the fall term of the 2010–2011 school year at an accredited two- or four-year college.

In addition to these qualifications, applicants will also be asked to answer a question (in 500 words or fewer) on why it is important for a public-sector employee to start early when saving for retirement.

The application and entry must be submitted online no later than Jan. 31, 2010.

General Government Issues

Benton Officials Look at Petition Certification for Seat Move

from the Tri-City Herald, Tuesday, December 15, 2009

Benton County officials hammered out a process to certify a petition that if OK'd, would put the issue of moving the county seat from Prosser to Kennewick to vote next year.

Retired Superior Court Judge Fred Staples has been gathering signatures for about four years. He submitted a petition with, he estimates, more than 20,000 signatures to the county commissioners late last month. He needs 13,684 valid signatures from registered Benton County voters for the county seat question to be put on the ballot. County commissioners decided Monday to hand the petition to the county auditor's office for safe keeping.

"That's a very important public document that has to be preserved," said Ryan Brown of the county Prosecutor's Office.

County officials soon will begin counting the signatures to make sure the petition has the necessary amount. If it does, members of the county auditor's office will begin electronically verifying each signature to ensure it belongs to a registered voter.

Any questionable signatures will be examined and ruled on by the county commissioners. The auditor's office will count the signatures, but the final verification will be left to the commissioners.

Staples believes Kennewick should be the county seat because the majority of county employees work in Kennewick.

The issue was voted on in 1984, when Staples began his first campaign to move the county seat, but failed to get the 60 percent super-majority vote.

Boards & Commissions

WACO Vacancy on the Municipal Research Council

WACO President Barbara Wagner is asking that WACO members who are interested in serving on the Municipal Research Council submit a letter of interest to the WACO office by December 29. Selection of the new representative will be made in early January.

The Municipal Research Council is a state agency that provides a comprehensive research and services program for the 281 cities and towns and 39 counties of Washington State. This is the continuation and expansion of a program that began in 1934 as a cooperative arrangement between the Association of Washington Cities and the Bureau of Governmental

Research and Services at the University of Washington. Operations are funded out of a small portion of the cities' and counties' distribution of liquor profits and the Liquor Excise Tax. The Council has fourteen members: two appointed by the President of the Senate; two appointed by the Speaker of the House; one member shall be the director of community, trade and economic development; six members appointed by the Association of Washington Cities, two appointed by the Washington State Association of Counties, and one appointed by the Washington Association of County Officials.

The Municipal Research Council was created for the purpose of providing cost-saving research and services to local governments through one centralized source. The Council's programs are designed to provide technical expertise that for the most part is not affordable to an individual local government and to eliminate duplication of effort that occurs when services are performed separately by individual local governments. Since its inception it has been strongly supported by the user cities and towns who rely heavily on these services to function within municipal budgetary constraints. It appears that counties are also sharing these benefits, even though the county program is very new.

The Municipal Research Council is a state agency without a staff. Its programs are implemented through a contract with a not-for-profit organization called the Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC). Key programs include an inquiry service program, which answered over 7,500 requests for assistance in 1999. Staff experience includes budgeting and finance, municipal law, public management and administration, planning and growth management, public works and utilities, and local government policies. The Council usually meets twice a year. Members are reimbursed for their travel expenses.

MRSC houses a reference library comprised of local documents, state laws, ordinances, city and county codes, magazines, journals, and standard reference works. City and county officials are encouraged to send copies of local ordinances, reports, studies, planning documents, comprehensive plans, surveys, and other items to MRSC so that they can be shared with other local governments.

You can access MRSC's Web site at www.mrsc.org. This information-packed site includes the Revised Code of Washington, Washington Administrative Code, municipal and county codes, ordinances, and a wealth of information relevant to local governments in Washington State.

MRSC continues the publishing program started in 1934. It includes information bulletins, research memorandums, and reports.

MRSC programs belong to Washington cities and counties. MRC appreciates any [comments or suggestions](#) to improve their services.

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

U.S. Communities Government Purchasing Alliance (U.S. Communities)

Designed in cooperation with an Advisory Board of local government purchasing officials, U.S. Communities pools the purchasing power of public agencies, achieves bulk volume discounts on behalf of public agencies, competitively solicits quality products through a lead public agency and provides a purchasing forum for public agencies nationwide.

You can obtain information on how to contact all U.S. Communities suppliers by telephoning (866) 472-7467 or by sending an email to info@uscommunities.org

U.S. Communities | 2175 North California Blvd., Suite 550, Walnut Creek, CA 94596

(866) 472-7467 | info@uscommunities.org

©2003 U.S. Communities Purchasing and Finance Agency



"Results from our internal customer satisfaction survey show that our customers want two things from Purchasing. First save us time in the procurement process and second save us money. When Kansas City, Missouri uses a U.S. Communities contract we save both time and money for our customers."

Ray Burnett,
Commissioner of Purchases and Supplies
Kansas City, MO.