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Time to Get Your Registration in for the Upcoming WACO Conference!

By James McMahan, WACO Staff

On May 14, all WACO members received an email containing the registration information necessary to attend the 2010 WACO Conference (October 5-8, 2010 at the Lodge at Suncadia). WACO is very excited with the conference agenda for this year and looks forward to seeing many of you there.

Please take advantage of our early registration opportunities - if you register (complete with payment) prior to July 17, 2010, WACO will apply a \$75 discount to your registration fee. This early registration discount enables us to make your \$275 registration fee for the 2010 conference the same amount as the 2009 and 2008 conference registration fees. A \$50 discount applies to registrations received between July 18, 2010 and August 28, 2010. Registrations received after August 28, 2010 will be charged the full conference registration fee of \$350.

WACO recognizes that it can take several days to get a check delivered. Therefore, for the purposes of determining the conference registration discounts, we will consider the date that we received your registration form the date that you are registered for the conference, not the date that we receive your check. In other words, we will honor your \$275 conference registration check as long as we receive your registration form before July 17.

If you have any questions or have trouble registering for the conference (including requests to have conference registration forms sent to you again), please contact WACO's Kathie Houts at (360) 753-7319 or khouts@wacounties.org. You can also look up conference information on the WACO website at www.wacounties.org/waco - click on the Conference tab.

If you will be staying at the conference hotel, you can make those arrangements now as well. Make your conference hotel arrangements by calling the Lodge at Suncadia at 1-866-904-6301. When you call, please know that there are two different room rates in our WACO room block, one for WACO members and one for WACO exhibitors. To ensure that you are in the correct room block, let the Suncadia representative know you are with WACO and give them the promo code of "Wagner." Space in the WACO room block is limited, so we recommend that you book early to ensure your room availability.

Association News

Auditor's Converge on Moses Lake

By James McMahan, WACO Staff

The 105th Annual Conference of the Washington State Association of County Auditors (WSACA) kicked off June 22 in Moses Lake. With a "Yes We Can!" theme, Auditors had their work cut out for them over their three day conference in the self-proclaimed "Washington's Great Escape."

The conference started with laughter and appreciation as the WSACA Legislative Co-Chairs presented their 2010 Legislative Awards.

Wednesday morning started the week's marathon work sessions, but first, Auditors welcomed Secretary of State Sam Reed, Director of Elections Nick Handy, and Communications Director Dave Ammons for a 'Working with the Media' training. Dave, a renowned veteran of Olympia's press corps for the Associated Press, gave insight and advice on working with non-traditional media, strategies for developing and messaging good news from government, among other things.

Secretary Reed, during Wednesday's lunch, presented Thurston County Auditor Kim Wyman, with the Auditor of the Year Award.

Auditors then embarked on part two of a strategic planning session that has been in the works for more than a year. Dubbed '2020 Vision,' auditors set out to create a work plan for each of the four divisions of the Auditor's Office – elections, licensing, recording, and finance. Auditors worked into the evening, often skipping breaks, and started again bright and early Thursday morning presenting, discussing, debating, measuring and evaluating a variety of concepts as part of their 2020 Vision process.

Thursday afternoon presented an opportunity to take a break from the strategic planning process, when Cora Johnson, from the Franklin-Pierce School District, facilitated a team-building exercise. The team races across the room with legs tied together and blind-folded square rope exercises, among other activities, was a welcome break from the hours-long policy discussion.

The Thursday banquet gave an opportunity to pay tribute to retiring auditors and time to thank outgoing WSACA Officers and committee chairs, raise funds for the Washington County Scholarship Fund, and enjoy several rounds of blissful fiddle playing by Pend Oreille County's own Marianne Nichols.

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

Bill Information: www.leg.wa.gov

Friday morning wrapped up the work of the week, where Auditors adopted their 2020 goals and identified seven action items for the 2011 legislative session.

The newly installed WSACA Officers are:
Pat Garner, Pacific County – President
Vicky Dalton, Spokane County – Vice President
Walt Washington, Kitsap County – Treasurer
Zone Lenhart, Franklin County - Secretary

Treasurers Meet in Bellingham

By James McMahan, WACO Staff

The Washington State Association of County Treasurers (WSACT) met June 14-18 in Bellingham for their 105th Annual Conference. WSACT President Bob Lothspeich, Whitman County, together with his education and conference team, put on an exciting and educational program, while Steve Oliver, Whatcom County, arranged a memorable conference environment.

Taking place at the Best Western Lakeway Inn in Bellingham, the conference officially kicked off with a welcome from Whatcom County Executive Pete Kremen. Executive Kremen made some interesting remarks related to the recent Department of Revenue interpretation regarding sales tax exemption for certain Canadian provinces and its potential impact on Whatcom County revenues. Treasurers were also ‘pomp and circumstanced’ with an impressive presentation of the colors by the Whatcom County Fire District #7 Color Guard and were serenaded by Danielle Nakatani, a Squalicum High School student who preformed a wonderful rendition of the National Anthem.

The Conference keynote speaker was Dr. John Mitchell, who gave an insightful and entertaining presentation of “Stirred, Shaken & Recovering” – an economic analysis of the recession and recovery. The remainder of Tuesday’s business day was spent learning about financial fraud and learning ways to prevent and discover fraud, learning about disaster preparedness, and a legal overview of public records and finder fees.

Tuesday evening brought an elegant Sunset Bay Cruise aboard the Victoria Star 2. The 3 hour tour departed out of Bellingham Bay, circled Lummi Island, and returned in the midst of a spectacular sunset over the Sound.

Wednesday was a shortened conference day, hosting business meetings and roundtables for Treasurers and their deputies, leaving the afternoon for conference attendees to explore (and spend money in) Whatcom County.

Thursday brought training sessions on bankruptcy proceedings and the County’s role as a debtor in bankruptcy cases, a refresher course on levies, an update on IRS audits of counties and County Treasurers, a presentation from the State Treasurer’s Office on the creation of an intermediate investment pool, and a presentation by motivational speaker Jody Urquhart on the value and application of humor in the workplace. Thursday evening’s annual banquet honored Treasurers serving their association, the installation of new WSACT officers, and attendees were entertained by the Upfront Theatre – a local improve theater group founded by Comedian Ryan Stiles.

Friday’s business meeting concluded the 105th Annual WSACT Conference with memorials and resolutions thanking the Best Western Lakeway Inn for their service hosting the conference and remembering colleagues who have passed since the last conference.

The newly installed WSACT Officers are:
Bob Lothspeich, Whitman County – President
Linda Fisher, Lincoln County- Vice President
Sue Harnasch, Stevens County – Secretary
Scott Matheson, King County - Treasurer

Now Accepting 2013 WACO Conference Bids

By James McMahan, WACO Staff

WACO is now accepting bids to host its 2013 Conference. WACO conferences rotate between the eastside and the westside of the state each year, and the 2013 conference will be on the westside.

Each WACO conference generates between \$60,000 and \$90,000 in gross revenue to the conference hotel and approximately \$8,000 in sales tax revenue (assuming a 10% local sales tax rate).

If you are interested in having the 2013 WACO Conference in your county, please start working with your local vendors to prepare a proposal for submission to WACO by August 31, 2010.

For your convenience, we have posted a document to the WACO website (www.wacounties.org/waco - click on the Conference tab) that outlines the facility requirements for a WACO conference, as well as a quick explanation of the site selection process.

Please note that proposals will only be considered if they have a letter of endorsement of at least one WACO member from their county (we want you to want us to come). As such, please be advised that as the WACO office continues to receive calls and inquiries from local venues, we will be referring those inquiries to their respective county officials.

Introduction/presentation of qualified 2013 proposals will be made during the Wednesday (Oct 6, 2010) WACO Business meeting at the 2010 WACO Conference, and selection will take place by ballot beginning that same day. The winning bid will be announced during the Friday (Oct 8, 2010) WACO Business Meeting.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call or email. We're here to help.

Now Accepting Applications for the 2010 WACO Distinguished Service Award

By James McMahan, WACO Staff

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2010 WACO Distinguished Service Award. This award was created in 1985 to recognize retired or former county officials who have made outstanding contributions to county government and to their communities. WACO members may nominate any former WACO member whether or not they are from the same county.

In addition to being a former WACO member, consideration will be given to innovations and contributions that the nominee has made within their county; participation in WACO; various committees and organizations in which they were involved (local, state, association or national levels); affiliate participation; and community service. There is a point system consisting of 10 points for each category, and 40 points are needed to qualify for the award. More than one award may be presented in a given year.

A WACO Distinguished Service Award nomination form is available for download on the WACO website at www.wacounties.org/waco - click on the Conference tab.

Completed forms must be mailed back to WACO, 206 10th Avenue, SE, Olympia, WA 98501, marked AWARD SELECTION COMMITTEE, no later than **SEPTEMBER 1, 2010**.

Qualifying nominations will be reviewed by the Award Selection Committee. Award winner(s) will be honored during the 52nd Annual WACO Conference, at the Lodge at Suncadia, in Kittitas County, during the WACO Banquet the evening of Thursday, October 7, 2010.

Nominations from previous years must be re-submitted in order to be considered again this year. All nominations are confidential.

WACO Exhibitor Hall Registration

By James McMahan, WACO Staff

Registration for the 2010 WACO Conference Exhibitor Hall is now open as well. If you are, or know of, an organization interested in being an exhibitor for the 2010 WACO Conference Exhibitor Hall, please contact James McMahan, WACO Deputy Director at jamesm@wacounties.org or (360) 753-7319.

The WACO Exhibitor Hall Invitation is also available for download from the WACO website at www.wacounties.org/waco - click on the Conference tab.

WACO is offering a \$150 discount on the registration fee and a 25% discount over the standard Suncadia lodging rates for exhibitors who sign up prior to July 30, 2010.

Auditors' Association Update

By Pat Gardner, Pacific County Auditor & WSACA President

The Washington State Association of County Auditors (WSACA) is going to be busy the coming year. WSACA has already begun to work on legislation for next year. We have two priority bills for WACO and five other bills that are priorities for the association. These seven bills cover everything from elections, recording, licensing and the Auditor's position as a non-partisan position. The association is also working on a Regional Conference for elections to be held in June 2011. The conference committee has three locations they are considering, two in Washington and one in Oregon State. Election personnel from across the nation attend this function. We have to give the committee a hand for the time and effort that individuals commit to this project.

A new adventure that the Department of Licensing and WSACA have been working on for a few years is near completion. This program is a certification program for Vehicle Field Operators. The certification process will be similar to the election certification program.

The association will have five conferences to prepare for the coming year including the Regional Election conference. We will have conferences for Legislation, Recording, Finance and the Auditors. Items that will also involve the association will be the census, redistricting and the MOVE act by the Federal government.

These items will keep the associate busy for most of 2011.

WSACA has started a plan for the future, establishing goals for 2020 and how we are going to achieve them. This will be very interesting work over the next 10 years. Wish us luck!

Clerks' Association Update

By Betty Gould, Thurston County Clerk, for Kevin Stock, Pierce County Clerk & WSACC President

The Washington State Association of County Clerks (WSACC) had a very busy and successful summer conference in Richland the end of June. The training was exceptional and provided information regarding new technology for a touch screen minute program and an in-depth demonstration on the LINX court management program presented by members of Pierce County. As an Association, we find our plate is full as we deal with proposed legislative issues that would have a negative impact on our offices and the counties as other agencies try to cut their costs from our fees.

We are moving forward with planning training for our collections staff on legal financial obligations (LFO) for September 2010; working with other entities on issues related to proposed general rules that have a huge impact on

our offices and, sharing information that will help the clerks move forward with implementation of technology that will help us meet the needs of the court and our customers as we continue to face budget cuts. Our legislative agenda for 2011 is legislation that is a cleanup language in a couple statutes – nothing will be brought forward from our Association that costs dollars.

Treasurers' Association Update

By Bob Lothspeich, Whitman County Treasurer & WSACT President

The Washington State Association of County Treasurers completed a highly successful summer conference in Bellingham in June. We fulfilled our mission of educating, advocating, mentoring and supporting the creation of effective treasury management systems. High on our list of education were presentations on fraud, bankruptcy, and disaster preparedness, the state of the “economic recovery” and IRS audits of Treasurers. We continue to help each other throughout the year by responding to the “question of the day” e-mails where one of us needs advice or clarification on how to deal with a subject or issue in the office. The one thing you will not see from the Treasurers this year will be proposed legislation, the first time this has happened in my 10 years as a County Treasurer. I would like to think that we have cleaned up all of the statutes that affect us, but I know that is not the case. We plan to be on the defensive regarding the next legislative session, as usual, to protect the best interests of Washington State Treasury management.

Budget, Finance and Taxes

What is PILT and How Can We Get More?

Every time PILT payments go out to the counties, it seems to elicit a flurry of questions as to how we can get more PILT money, or why aren't we getting as much as the county next to us.

So much gets lost in the shuffle because there are three different kinds of PILT money, but it is seldom delineated enough for offices to determine exactly what the payment is for. It might be timely to revisit what PILT is, who pays it and for what. Remember, PILT (or Payment in Lieu of Taxes was initiated to reimburse counties for lost property taxes on lands that were acquired by agencies that did not pay property taxes. It would appear that a simple reimbursement program has grown and become anything but simple.

The most recent PILT money that at least some counties received was from the Federal Government through the Bureau of Land Management. At least some of the counties received quite a bit more than they had in the past. This of course followed after the story was released nationwide that Federal PILT Payments would be late this year, only to be followed by the issuance of the payments about a week later, and in most cases for more money than last year. It had most county folks scratching their heads, but in a positive manner.

Let's look at the Federal PILT first and why counties receive it. The Annual Federal PILT Payments to local governments are computed based on the number of acres of Federal entitlement land within each county or jurisdiction. Federal entitlement lands include lands within the National Forest and National Park Systems; those managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM); those affected by the Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation water resources development projects, and certain other Federal Lands.

As with any federal monies, there is an incredibly complex formula that they apply for these funds. When you consider that these funds also interact with Refuge Revenue Sharing Fund, the National Forest Fund, the Taylor Grazing Act, the Mineral Leasing Act, and Federal Power Act, and the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, it is literally impossible for the counties to figure exactly what they are going to get. Throw into the mix acreage changes, population adjustments, the Consumer Price Index and all the adjustments made by interacting laws, and maybe it is best just to cash the check and not question the amount.

Our second tier of PILT emanates from the State of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Most generally, these are a per acre payment based on either \$.70 per acre as adopted by the County Legislative authority or Game Fines. At one time, counties were given the choice and decisions were made concerning which reimbursement of PILT to select.

Some counties have recently elected to apply their Public Benefit Rating System values to these lands. This means that instead of the flat rate these reimbursements are now figured on a percentage of market value, and the local levy rates (less the State Levy) applied against that value.

Our third category, and most recent PILT money acquisition, is for land owned or controlled by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on their lands classified as NAP (Natural Area Preserves) or NRCA (Natural Resource Conservation Areas). These are specially classified lands and the only ones subject to PILT payments at this time. In this case, the reimbursement is based on 50% of the Market Value of these lands times the local levy rate (Less the State Levy Portion). On these lands the county Assessor will prepare a list, and the county Treasurer will in effect send a tax bill to the State based on the Assessors list.

It has become rather obvious that "PILT" all seems to get lumped together in people's minds. But we really need to keep them separate and distinct because of the different ways they are funded, and the different policies or changes that can affect them.

So, the next time you get asked a question about PILT Money, determine first which PILT they are asking about. It can make a rather substantial difference in how you answer the question.

You know the saying..."All work and no play..."

