No Bones About It

As your County Commissioner I receive lots of calls and emails on various issues. One of the issues I hear about the loudest is the need for a local off-leash dog park.

Off-leash parks benefit dogs and the community. They create a gathering spot for social and recreational activity.

County staff have begun the process of working with local jurisdictions as well as Thurston County Animal Services, the Humane Society and South Hounds.

With limited financial resources these partnerships will be what’s needed to make this vision a reality.

One of the possible site locations is the Waste and Recovery Center located by Hawks Prairie. I recently toured this 5 acre site and found it has a lot of potential.

In the coming months staff will be working with engineers on a draft plan and putting together a budget for preliminary costs.

Stay tuned!

Federal grant funding will fuel energy conservation efforts

Climate change has become a household phrase as the world struggles with the threat of a warming planet.

Thurston County has made climate change a priority and is poised to receive $617,200 in federal grant money for projects that reduce energy use, curb greenhouse gas emissions, and improve energy efficiency.

Thurston County will receive $250,000 when the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) receives the county’s application for funding. The remaining $367,200 will be disbursed when the county completes and receives DOE approval of an energy efficiency conservation strategy.

The grants are funded through the “Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant” program, which is part of the president’s economic stimulus package known as the “American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.”

The grant program allows local jurisdictions to use the grant money in a number of ways. For example, the money could be used to develop building codes and inspections, conduct energy audits, retrofit residential and commercial buildings, and install energy-efficient signals and street lights.

Commissioners Cathy Wolfe, Karen Valenzuela and I have approved a phased approach for creating programs and services under the grant program.

One of the first goals is to update county building codes so that new construction meets higher energy efficiency standards. The codes would affect new development in unincorporated Thurston County only; the cities enforce their own building standards. Another priority is to determine which Thurston County buildings should receive conservation upgrades and retrofits. And of course, the county must complete the energy conservation strategy as soon as possible in order to receive the entire grant amount.

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program is intended to fight climate change from the ground-up, recognizing that local governments are in the best position to influence energy use in their own communities. Here in Thurston County, we intend to hit the ground running.