

THURSTON COUNTY

CAPITAL COUNTY OF WASHINGTON STATE
ESTABLISHED 1852

PLEASE JOIN US FOR COFFEE!

There is a lot happening in Thurston County. My monthly coffees give you the opportunity to learn about issues of concern with our guest speakers.

Complimentary coffee provided.

DECEMBER 12th

RAINIER

9:30 am-10:30 am
Rainier City Hall
102 Rochester St.

YELM

11 a.m.-noon
Fadi's Restaurant
(Tahoma Golf Course)
15425 Mosman Ave. S.W.

Lacey

2 p.m.-3 p.m.
Olympic Crest Coffee
4211 Pacific Ave.

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Commissioner Romero's County Newsletter

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 9

NOVEMBER 2011



Thurston County Budget

Any county budget is a statement of what a community values, and the budgeting process is a balancing of those values and competing resources. With the economic decline over the past few years, maintaining services has been difficult. Our county's budget is made up of 78 separate funds with 19 distinct departments and offices, all of equal importance to our community.

From 2007 to 2009, sales tax revenues dropped \$1.5 million. The value of new construction declined; real estate excise tax revenue decreased; and the county loaned the general fund \$6 million from the Detention Sales Tax Fund to meet cash flow needs in 2009. These were difficult years, but there were things we could do.

The general fund expenditures were reduced by \$5.4 million; the county's workforce was cut by 146 FTEs; departments were consolidated from fourteen

to eight; the transfer from the county roads fund to the general fund for repayment of traffic safety costs was increased; and all of us, elected and otherwise, looked for every opportunity to save.

As a result, the county will end 2011 with a balance in the general fund of more than \$15 million, and all funds have a fiscally responsible balance.

Outlook for 2012

Unfortunately, we once again expect slow growth in sales tax and other revenues, especially from construction and real estate. There will also be reductions in state and federal grants, but we are being aggressive in finding new sources.

Revenue is expected to be flat or to grow very slowly, and forecasts for 2013 and beyond suggest systematic changes are necessary.



We still, however, have to address the needs of a growing population with an aging transportation system and other needed capital improvements.

We are currently in budget deliberations. There will be a public hearing on December 5 in Building 1, at the County Courthouse, Room 280, 5:30 p.m. Following the public hearing we will deliberate on the testimony, and on December 16, 2011, 10 a.m., we will adopt the final budget.

Although there will be a general fund decrease of \$0.1 million, we are working hard to maintain services.

If you have suggestions, please come to the December 5 hearing and let us hear your ideas.

We're Redistricting!

Every ten years the United States conducts a population census. After the census has been completed, depending on population shifts and growth, congressional, legislative and county legislative boundaries may need to be changed to ensure that each district has an almost equal number of people.

Even though the latest census numbers show the smallest change in decades, we do need to make some minor changes in the county commissioners' boundaries.

My district, number 2, needs to lose 4,141 people and Commissioner Wolfe's district needs to gain 928 people. Commissioner Valenzuela's district needs to gain 3,213 people. County commissioners are responsible for adjusting the county's district boundaries as well as precinct and port district boundaries. Public Utility Districts (PUDs) may form their own boundaries. The boundaries will be redrawn using the target population of 84,088.

Since the census data was received in March 2011, Commissioners Wolfe, Valenzuela and I have been working with the Port of Olympia and Public Utility District commissioners to develop a redistricting plan.

We've held three public information meetings - one in Tenino and two at the Thurston County Courthouse. Based upon public input received, we voted to approve a plan that balances population evenly among the three districts. The approved plan can be found at: www.co.thurston.wa.us/auditor/Elections/Redistricting/layers/final.pdf.

Key changes in the plan have the Vail and Bald Hills precincts in southeastern Thurston County moving into District 1 from District 2. Also moving into District 1 is a small area just south of Mullen Road and east of College Street. Meanwhile, Bucoda, Skookumchuck, Gibson Valley and Tumwater urban growth area precincts move into District 3.

A final adjustment has precincts within the City of Olympia and near Olympia High School moving from District 3 into District 1.

The plan assures that each of the three districts shares the same complete geographic diversity that shapes Thurston County. Each district also has a municipality from south county in it. Final action to formally adopt the plan is expected to take place on December 6, 2011.

Fast Fact

Thurston County is made up of three commissioner districts. One commissioner is elected from each district during the primary election process. These elected officials run countywide in the November general election and all three commissioners represent the entire unincorporated county.



Site for Camp Quixote



"Any society, any nation, is judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members—the last, the least, the littlest."

—Cardinal Roger Mahony, in a 1998 letter, "Creating a Culture of Life"

In Thurston County, a group of dedicated citizens are working to make our society better. They are called "Panza" and are working to help some truly needy individuals who are homeless. Their goal is to realize a sustainable homeless village for about 30 individuals.

Camp Quixote, a camp for the homeless, began in 2007 as a project in downtown Olympia. When authorities moved to clear the camp, a church offered it sanctuary on its grounds.

Although controversial when it started, opposition waned and other churches came forward to host the camp.

The City of Olympia and neighboring jurisdictions passed ordinances allowing the camp to exist, but required it to move from one church to another every 90 days. The county ordinance allows for 6-month stays.

The group is supported by Panza, a nonprofit organization that grew out of the faith communities. They have hosted the camp financially and provided hundreds of volunteers to help campers meet their needs and get back on their feet.

The camp has moved 20 times and moves are difficult for people struggling to recover from adversity, illness, unemployment, and disabilities. The residents have always hoped to find land on which they could build a permanent village. They would like to build a central community building that includes bathrooms, showers, laundry facilities and a shared kitchen, and 30 one-room cottages.

Camp Quixote now has a site. Thurston County has provided county-owned land on Mottman Road. The land is within Olympia city limits in a light industrial zone. Panza is currently working with the city on a zoning change allowing them to build on this location. Once the budget and zoning are established, Panza will formally begin its capital campaign and start seeking private and public sector funding.