

COUNTY OF WALLA WALLA
STATE OF WASHINGTON
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

April 9, 2018

NEWSRELEASE

Walla Walla County Board of Commissioners
County Public Health and Legislative Building
314 West Main/P. O. Box 1506
Walla Walla, WA 99362
509/524-2505

WALLA WALLA COUNTY RECOGNIZES APRIL AS NATIONAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT MONTH

National County Government Month is a fitting time to reaffirm the continued importance of a strong partnership between City, County, State, and Federal Government. Government closest to the people is truly government "of the people, by the people, and for the people." This is the essence of democracy, and it is the key to meeting many of the challenges and opportunities before our country and our county.

During the 1800s and the early part of this century, the primary functions of county government involved the administration of justice, law enforcement, and the building and maintenance of roads; however, in recent decades the responsibilities of county government have grown enormously. Now the nation's 3,069 counties serve more than 300 million Americans and provide essential services to create a healthy, safe and vibrant environment, with county government leaders taking pride in their responsibility to protect and enhance the health, welfare and safety of its residents in efficient and cost-effective ways.

So many programs and services are made available through county government. The Sheriff's office, Prosecuting Attorney's office, Superior and District courts, County Clerk's office, and County Corrections work together on criminal justice. The Department of Community Health acts to keep families healthy and fight disease. County roads and bridges are built, maintained and serviced by the Public Works Department to protect the travelling public. When natural or man-made disasters strike, county-provided emergency management services keep citizens safe and informed, and emergency medical services are a call away when personal emergencies occur. Through services and programs of the Juvenile Justice Center, troubled youth receive help. Elections services exhibit our democracy at work. Other State Constitution mandated offices such as the county assessor, county auditor, county coroner, and county treasurer perform duties necessary to county operations.

In addition, Community Development Department is responsible for administering the county's zoning, subdivision, and environmental regulations, administering the local, and state building and fire codes, and enforcing the nuisance code, along with many other services. Human Resources/Risk Management and Technology Services departments are an important part of the county's organization providing specialized services., and through an agreement with Washington State University, a Cooperative Extension office is housed here, with 4-H programs and oversight, assistance with questions on food preparation, preservation, and safety, gardening, and a myriad of other topics. The county fairgrounds is a year-round event center hosting a myriad of events.

A list of county offices and departments and their roles and responsibilities is provided with this news release for even more information.

In short, counties provide services that make America's communities stronger, safer places to live and raise families, and county governments are citizens' local voice to that end. In honor of county governments, the Walla Walla County Board of Commissioners has issued a proclamation honoring April as National County Government Month and as part of that recognition are urging all citizens to acquaint themselves with county government and to recognize the contributions that county officials and employees make every day to our health, safety, comfort, and quality of life. The county commissioners invite all citizens to attend county meetings (county commissioners' sessions, planning commission meeting, or any of the various advisory board meetings), visit county government offices, or learn more about the services county government offers by visiting Walla Walla County on-line at www.co.walla-walla.wa.us.

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JAMES K. JOHNSON

District No.2
TODD L. KIMBALL

District No.3
JAMES L. DUNCAN

DESCRIPTION OF WALLA WALLA COUNTY OFFICES AND DEPARTMENTS AND FUNCTIONS
APRIL, 2018
INFORMATION FOR NATIONAL COUNTY GOVERNMENT MONTH

OFFICES:

The office of County Assessor Debra Antes maintains county parcel maps, property assessments, sets levy rates and administers state mandated programs, such as the Senior Citizen/Disabled Persons and Current Use programs. Over time this office was able to facilitate a change to an annual revaluation cycle, implement a new computer-assisted mass appraisal system, and integrate new hand-held fielding devices to assist the appraisers in inspecting properties, all as a means of efficiency and equality of information needed for the assessments.

County Auditor Karen Martin's office is mandated to provide a range of services, including elections and voter registration, vehicle and vessel titling and licensing, issuing marriage licenses, performing recording of documents and assisting with searches of same, and accounting, from being responsible for payment of all county-incurred expenditures to issuing the annual call for the preliminary county budget that is then compiled and conveyed to the Board of County Commissioners for final adoption. A remodel of the elections center, to facilitate more public participation, will be completed soon.

County Clerk Kathy Martin's office is responsible for maintaining Superior Court records and case filings, including tracking exhibits and taking minutes of hearings, and processes adult and juvenile legal financial obligations for the Court as well as assisting with passport applications. Over the years the recordkeeping has been upgraded from huge docket books to indexing all documents in to a statewide computer system. Currently all records back to 1921 have been made permanently available on a document imaging system, and all other records are now being processed. In June the Clerk's office will be implementing a new statewide case management system, which will record all case documents, set hearings, and track financial obligations.

The basic form of county government is the Commissioner form. County Commissioners Jim Johnson, Todd Kimball, and Jim Duncan. These elected officials are empowered to set county policy, adopt and implement laws and, except for the responsibilities of the other separately elected officials, carry out the day-to-day operations of the county. The county is divided into three districts with roughly equal populations and each commissioner must live in the district he or she wishes to represent. County commissioners are elected on a partisan basis. As the county legislative authority, the Board of County Commissioners is responsible for adopting, amending or repealing all county ordinances, which are essentially laws of the county. The commissioners also fix and adopt the county's annual budget, impose the taxes and set the fees to fund that budget. In addition, they make decisions on a wide variety of other subjects affecting the general health, safety, and welfare of county residents. For additional information, please see the handout at the following link: <http://www.co.walla-walla.wa.us/departments/comms/docs/Countycommissionerinformationalhandout-website-updated2018.pdf>

Coroner Richard Greenwood must investigate any unattended, accidental, suicide, homicide or suspicious death, and authorize autopsy, toxicology and other testing as necessary, as well as to track, identify and notify next-of-kin. As part of his responsibilities, the coroner must collect, count and dispose of decedent's medications and drugs and inventory and return personal property and assist families with information, which working closely with agencies such as law enforcement, prosecutors, adult and child protective services, first responders, medical community, funeral homes, health department, and attorneys. Personally Mr. Greenwood participates in the "Every 15 Minutes" and "Topsy Taxi" programs, speaks to high school science classes, and works closely with suicide and drug / alcohol prevention groups, veterans organizations and organ procurement services. He is

proud to have led the effort to establish a public crypt for unclaimed indigents and implemented a case management system. The coroner's office has a staff of three, handles approximately 365 to 385 cases a year, authorizes 35 to 50 autopsies per year, and last year oversaw the cremation of twelve indigent persons.

County Prosecuting Attorney Jim Nagle's office represents the State of Washington in all criminal cases, represents Walla Walla County in all civil cases, and is the legal advisor to 20 different County departments. Each year the County Prosecutor's Office processes 350-400 adult felony cases, 100-200 juvenile criminal cases, and 800-1,000 gross misdemeanor and misdemeanor cases. The Office provides support to victims and witnesses in criminal cases. The County Prosecutor's Office also represents the State in child dependency cases and child support cases.

District Court Judges Kristian Hedine and John Knowlton cover three jurisdictions within Walla Walla County: City of Walla Walla, City of College Place and the County of Walla Walla. Walla Walla District Court (WWDC) has jurisdiction over both criminal and civil cases, including misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor cases that involve traffic or non-traffic offenses, and in civil cases including damages for injury to individuals or personal property and contract disputes in amounts of up to \$100,000. WWDC also has jurisdiction over traffic and non-traffic infractions and handles Small Claims cases (which are limited to money claims of up to \$5,000), as well as Domestic Violence and Antiharassment Orders. WWDC has made access to the Court easier as citizens can go online to mitigate and contest traffic infractions and can pay their fines online, and recently the WWDC Probation Department has facilitated Domestic Violence- MRT classes and now an Anger Management class. Both of these classes are designed not only to help the participants but also to contribute to the betterment of our community.

Sheriff: Pursuant to an extract of the Revised Code of Washington Chapter 36.28.010, Sheriff John Turner is theconservator of the peace of the county, and in the execution of his office, he or his deputies shall arrest and commit to prison all persons who break the peace, or attempt to break it, and all persons guilty of public offenses; shall defend the county against those who, by riot or otherwise, endanger the public peace or safety; shall execute the process and orders of the courts of justice or judicial officers, when delivered for that purpose, according to law; shall execute all warrants delivered for that purpose by other public officers, according to the provisions of particular statutes; shall attend the sessions of the courts of record held within the county, and obey their lawful orders or directions; and shall keep and preserve the peace in their respective counties, and quiet and suppress all affrays, riots, unlawful assemblies and insurrections, for which purpose, and for the service of process in civil or criminal cases, and in apprehending or securing any person for felony or breach of the peace, they may call to their aid such persons, or power of their county as they may deem necessary. The sheriff's office works closely with the prosecuting attorney, courts, clerk of the court, coroner, and with law enforcement representatives of the cities within the county and surrounding counties, as well the state patrol and other respective agencies.

Superior Court: Walla Walla County Superior Court consists of two departments designated as Department I (Judicial Position I, held by Presiding Judge John Lohrmann) and Department II (Judicial Position 2, Judge Scott Wolfram). Each judge appoints a court reporter to record proceedings; there is also a part-time Court Commissioner. Superior Courts are the trial courts of general jurisdiction in Washington. A Superior Court may consider all civil and criminal matters occurring within a county's boundary. They act as a court of appeal for cases from the District and Municipal Courts. Juvenile court is a division of the superior court, established by law to deal with youths under the age of 18 who commit offenses or are abused or neglected. Like adults, juvenile offenders are sentenced according to a uniform set of guidelines. Fairly new to Superior Court are the adult, juvenile, and family drug courts. These courts are specially designed to achieve a reduction in recidivism and

substance abuse and to increase the offender's likelihood of successful habilitation through various forms of treatment and oversight.

Treasurer: County Treasurer Gordon Heimbigner's office holds a key position of public trust in the financial affairs of local government. Acting as the bank for the county, school districts, fire districts, irrigation and water districts and other local governments, the treasurer's office receipts, disburses and accounts for funds of each of these entities. In addition, the treasurer is charged with collection of various taxes that benefit a wide range of governmental units. Over sixty percent of the workload of the county treasurer's office is directed to providing service to the taxing districts. The major responsibilities of the county treasurer can be summarized in the following areas: Receipting and accounting of revenue; collection of taxes and assessments in excess of \$78,000,000; disbursement of funds; management of cash and investments that total over \$90,000,000; and debt management

DEPARTMENTS:

For the year 2017, Community Development Department approved 1,110 Building Permits, 44 of which were for construction of new single-family homes. Total valuation of all projects approved via the permits was over \$30 million. The Code Compliance Officer closed/resolved 101 cases. On the land use planning side, approvals were granted by that staff to 118 land use applications, including 16 subdivisions, 15 critical areas permits, 14 boundary line adjustments, and 28 SEPA reviews. In addition, there were ten monthly meetings of the Planning Commission. The Hearing Examiner held eight meetings. Under Community Development Department Director Tom Glover, the department is responsible for all land use planning, construction permitting, and code compliance activities within the unincorporated areas of the County, as well as administering the county's zoning, subdivision, and environmental regulations, maintaining and updating the county's comprehensive plan, administering building and fire codes, providing construction plan review and permitting services, and enforcing the nuisance code. The area served includes the urban growth areas of each of the four cities: College Place, Prescott, Waitsburg, and Walla Walla, and the unincorporated communities of Dixie, Lowden, Touchet, and Burbank.

Department of Community Health (DCH), under the direction of Meghan DeBolt, underwent a successful restructuring in 2018 and has retained highly productive, loyal, high quality team members while making other staff adjustments to ensure the needs of the County and its citizens are best met. DCH is the regional lead for marijuana prevention efforts and is actively working with the City of Walla Walla and other jurisdictions on homeless and affordable housing opportunities to help toward a better future for Walla Walla residents.

County Corrections includes both the Juvenile Justice Center and the County Jail and is unique in the State of Washington in that regard. The Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) is part of Superior Court and is responsible for supervising and providing therapeutic programs for at risk adolescents in Walla Walla and Columbia Counties, including probation supervision, truancy court, and at-risk youth petitions. JJC also manages the County's Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and Guardian ad Litem (GAL) programs and supervises three problem-solving courts: Family Treatment Court, Juvenile Therapeutic Court, and Adult Recovery Court. Norris "Norrie" Gregoire is the overall director of all referenced programs under the umbrella of this department.

Through the auspices of the Emergency Management Department, Liz Jessee, Director, assists and provides coordination in the case of natural or man-made disasters creating emergency and possibly life-threatening situations. Her department was front and center in the early stages of fighting the Blue Creek Fire and has assisted through both public information and frontline presence when flooding strikes, helping to ensure public safety. Using Everbridge Emergency Notification System, Emergency Management issues alerts to citizens of imminent threats to safety in their area, whether it

be regarding road closures, unsafe conditions, or weather issues. Before the fact through training exercises, and after the fact with collection of damage costs for submission to state and federal agencies, EMD is an integral factor in keeping our county safe and informed.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS): Working with funds collected by a separate voter-approved levy and in conjunction with the Medical Program Director, EMS Director Heather Lee evaluates the quality of Emergency Medical Services in Walla Walla County and recommends, develops, and implements program and policy changes related to EMS system. She ensures that approximately 170 EMS providers in Walla Walla County meet their annual training requirements to maintain their Washington State and National Registry certification requirements. Her department recently assisted the Walla Walla County EMS & Trauma Care Council in becoming an American Heart Association (AHA) Training Site. This enables agencies (for example, Walla Walla Community College and Walla Walla Fire Department) to offer AHA CPR and first aid courses in our community. Whether it's working with EMS personnel to ensure certification requirements are met or working with agencies to enable vital training is available to our citizens, the EMS Department works hard to meet all our communities' pre-hospital emergency needs.

Facilities Maintenance: The Walla Walla County Facilities Maintenance Department manager Tom Byers and staff are responsible for the cleaning, repairs, renovations, and major improvements to all of the 12 buildings that are under the purview of this department, and includes grounds maintenance. The covered buildings include the Courthouse, Hall of Records (Clerk's Offices), the Old Jail, District Court Building, County Annex and Public Health Building, County Jail, Public Safety Building Prosecuting Attorneys and Sheriff Offices, Juvenile Justice Center, WSU Extension Building, Emergency Management/911 Dispatch Center, Old Health Department/Elections/EMS and Coroner, and 1520 Kelly Place Building. These total over 205,000 square feet of building space. There are nine separate parking areas adjacent to each facility; combined there are spaces for are up to 197 open public stalls, 29 reserved stalls, and 15 handicap parking stalls. The department maintains the lawn and grounds at all of the buildings, and during winter months, is responsible for all snow removal on the sidewalks and entrances to all buildings.

Fairgrounds: The County Fairgrounds typically is the home for the single largest annual gathering of county residents and has hosted a showcase for the products, talents and culture at the county fair for 152 years, County Fairgrounds Manager Bill Ogg is proud to report. Year round, however, the facilities are busy hosting activities serving the diverse interests of county residents, from circuses, quilt shows, a crab feed, yard sales and other fundraisers, concerts, many horse-related events, weddings and quinceañeras, trainings, veterans services, and demolition derbies to name a few, and performing a significant role in driving economic activity and commerce benefitting the whole Walla Walla Valley.

Human Resources/Risk Manager Shelly Peters is responsible for developing and recruiting County position opportunities and administering the personnel policy and employee benefit programs. This department is also responsible for risk management and safety oversight and operations for the County. Recently the department implemented online job applications, which has greatly increased the applicant pool as well as the distribution of information on open job positions to many more interested parties.

The Public Works Department is responsible for the planning, engineering, design, construction, operation and maintenance of approximately 1000 miles of county roadway, 200 bridges and over 6 miles of flood control channel under the leadership of County Engineer Randy Glaeser. Department staff also coordinates design and construction of new development transportation infrastructure, provides county-wide GIS (Geographic Information Systems) support, oversees the County

stormwater management program and manages the County's vehicle and equipment fleet. The department recently acquired an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) or drone to survey, map, photograph and inspect engineering and construction projects. With the aid of the drone, we are able to survey large areas faster and safer, compared to traditional ground-based survey practices.

Technology Services Department: Technology Services is a full-service support group lending information technology (IT) support and backup to Walla Walla County technology users. Technology Services deploys and maintains computer systems, enterprise and specialized software, phone systems and networks, paying particular attention to IT security. The director and staff troubleshoot IT-related problems, assists with the county's website, and reviews proposed county IT solutions for effectiveness. The County's Public Records Officer also falls under the oversight of this department. Kevin Gutierrez serves as director.

WSU Cooperative Extension: The Walla Walla County WSU Extension has had an office here since 1913. Under current office chair Debbie Williams, Extension engages people, organizations, and communities to advance knowledge, economic well-being and quality of life by fostering inquiry, learning, and the application of research. Extension builds the capacity of individuals, organizations, businesses and communities, empowering them to find solutions for local issues and to improve their quality of life. Extension collaborates with communities to create a culture of life-long learning. Mrs. Williams advises that every dollar receive from Walla Walla County is leveraged with federal, state, grant, and private funding to maximize the outreach and effectiveness of the local Extension office. WSU provides support and expertise to Walla Walla County with researchers and specialists ready to assist in the areas of youth, families, food safety, agriculture, nutrition, gardening, and emergency management, to safeguard our community's economic wellbeing and the health of our community members. For more information visit <http://extension.wsu.edu/wallawalla/>