



Clatsop Tidings

A monthly review of County business

“Neighbor to neighbor, serving Clatsop County with integrity, honesty and respect”

August 2010

Afghan delegation hears from Health Director

Change can be difficult. Margo Lalich, director of the Clatsop County Public Health Department, shared that message with a group of foreign visitors July 29 in Astoria.

For Lalich, the change in question was a recent reorganization of the county’s health programs. For the visitors, a delegation of officials from war-torn Afghanistan, the challenge is more fundamental – bringing stable governance to a country where tribal rule, conflict and lawlessness are the norm.

But the visitors said they’ve seen examples of effective local government they hope to bring back to their home.

The 12-member group, made up of local and regional government officials, educators and aid organization representatives, are on a 21-day visit that will take them from Washington, D.C. to Arkansas, Oregon, New Hampshire and New York City.

The tour is organized by the International Visitor Leadership Program, an initiative of the U.S. State Department.

The goal is to introduce the visitors to governmental entities large and small, show how they operate, and explain the importance of transparency and account-



County Public Health Director Margo Lalich, with interpreter Homayun Saifi, speaks with Mohammad Rahim.

ability.

The group was welcomed by Human Resources Director Dean Perez, who served two tours of duty in Afghanistan as an officer in the Oregon Army National Guard.

Lalich explained how Public Health strives to meet the needs of its clients, how its operations are monitored by the state and federal agencies that provide

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FEMA flood map hearing set for Aug. 25

The Clatsop County Board of Commissioners is welcoming public testimony at a hearing Wednesday, Aug. 25 on new federal flood maps.

But regardless of the input, the board has little choice but to adopt the maps, or else jeopardize flood insurance coverage for many local property owners.

The hearing is scheduled for 6 p.m. Aug. 25 at the Judge Guy Boyington Building, 857 Commercial St., Astoria.

The maps, part of the National Flood Insurance Program, identify areas of the county susceptible to “100-year floods,” or flood events projected to occur once every 100 years.

The new FEMA maps were developed as part of an initiative launched in 2003 to transform old, paper flood-plain maps into easier-to-use digital versions. Along with the map

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Upcoming County Meetings

Board of Commissioners
Wednesday, Aug. 25, 6 p.m.
Judge Boyington Building

Board of Commissioners
Wednesday, Sept. 8, 10 a.m.
Judge Boyington Building

Times subject to change

Tasty thank-you



Commissioner Patricia Roberts offers Ricia Parcher her choice of ice cream treats Aug. 5 at the Clatsop County Fair as County Manager Duane Cole and commissioners Robert Mushen and Jeff Hazen look on. The commissioners handed out free ice cream to county volunteers like Parcher, who donates time at the county animal shelter, in appreciation of their service.

Afghan visitors inspired by public accountability

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most of its funding, and how she, as department director, works to ensure everyone in the organization is focused on the department's mission of protecting the health of the community.

Following the presentation, Muhammed Khan, a district chief and school principal in Uruzgan province in central Afghanistan, said he's impressed with the respect Americans seem to have for their local governmental entities and officials. In many regions in Afghanistan, one or two leaders hold most of the power, and a lack of a tax system means little public revenue for programs.

"I want to teach the people how to choose their own local representatives," he said.

New maps can mean tougher building rules for property owners

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modernization project, FEMA also launched a nationwide program to evaluate flood-control levees across the country and ensure they met the federal agency's minimum design and maintenance standards.

As a result of the evaluation, all levees in Clatsop County were deemed non-compliant, and properties on land protected by the levees are now considered at risk of flooding.

When the new maps were first made public in 2007, many property owners and local official complained that they contained numerous inaccuracies. Clatsop County and the City of Warrenton filed a formal appeal, but aside from some minor changes FEMA adopted the maps and forwarded them to local jurisdictions last March to incorporate into their land-use codes.

If the board of commissioners doesn't

adopt the new maps by FEMA's Sept. 17 deadline, the county could be dropped from the National Flood Insurance Program, leaving affected property owners ineligible for coverage through the program.

The county's action covers only the unincorporated areas of Clatsop County. Cities must adopt FEMA flood maps covering any affected lands within their boundaries.

Earning FEMA certification is difficult for many local diking districts because they are required to have professional engineers inspect and sign off on the structures, something many engineers are reluctant to do because of liability concerns, according to County Planner Jennifer Bunch. In other cases, some levees in the county were deemed too short to hold back 100-year-flood waters, but raising them to the necessary height would require extensive widening of the base into sensitive areas like wetlands,

she said.

Areas of the county most impacted by the new maps are Brownsmead and Miles Crossing/Jeffers Garden. FEMA also incorporated findings from a 2007 study of the Necanicum/Beerman Creek area south of Seaside that greatly expanded the flood hazard zone there.

The result for property owners in the affected areas is more stringent building standards, specifically an increase in minimum heights for habitable dwellings to place them above the new Base Flood Elevation. The county planning division is already enforcing these height requirements for new structures – in Miles Crossing, one new home was required to be built with its first floor more than six feet above the ground.

The complete staff report on the Flood Hazard Overlay ordinance can be viewed on the Clatsop County website, www.co.clatsop.or.us under "Hot Topics."