



Clatsop Tidings

A monthly review of County business

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

July 2010

Moes honored for loyal service to Clatsop County

Paying taxes may not be anyone’s idea of fun, but Betsy Moes strived to make sure Clatsop County citizens felt confident in how their tax dollars were handled.

Moes, who retires June 25 as Clatsop County Assessment and Taxation Director, was honored Wednesday by the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners with the Katherine Hellberg Award for Distinguished Service.

The award, established in 1997 in honor of former public health nurse and Health Department Director Katherine “Kay” Hellberg, recognizes Clatsop County employees “whose career and actions demonstrate a commitment to the highest ideals and values of public service and devotion to the community.”

Moes joined the Assessment and Taxation Department in 1974 as a clerk-typist. Except for a two-year tenure with the local district court, she spent the next 35 years with the department, accepting the top position of County Assessor in 2001.

The department and its 18 staff have



Betsy Moes is honored with the Katherine Hellberg Award June 23 by Board of Commissioners Chair Jeff Hazen (left) and County Manager Duane Cole.

the vital task of keeping county tax rolls up-to-date and ensuring efficient tax collection for the 63 public entities in Clatsop County that rely on local property tax revenue.

Processing all that data was decidedly

low-tech when Moes first joined the office. Employees hand-tallied columns of valuations that were recorded in 60 notebooks, and relied on typewriters, carbon

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Transportation plan offers road map for future projects

Improvements designed to enhance safety and traffic flow in the Miles Crossing/Jeffers Garden area are detailed in a new plan adopted July 14 by the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners.

The Miles Crossing/Jeffers Garden Refinement Plan provides a road map for future work on the Highway 101-Business corridor, which links Warrenton and Astoria through the rural community.

The plan is a collaborative project of the county and the Oregon Department of Transportation with collaboration from the cities of Astoria and Warrenton, and

included input from local agencies, business owners and citizens.

The project had its origins in the Rural Community overlay for the Miles Crossing/Jeffers Garden area adopted by the county in 2002. The new land-use designation allows higher-density uses and, combined with the recently completed sewer system improvements, is expected to spur more development in the area.

The plan identifies existing and potential shortcomings of the corridor as well as potential fixes aimed at providing for the transportation needs of local resi-

dents, through-travelers, freight haulers and cyclists and pedestrians through the year 2030.

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Upcoming
County Meetings

Board of Commissioners Wednesday, July 28, 6 p.m. Judge Boyington Building

Times subject to change

County Assessor's Office ranked #1 in customer service

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paper and calculators.

"It was a very manual system," Moes said. "The technology has changed tremendously since then."

As Deputy Assessor in the 1990s, Moes played a key role helping the department adjust to voter-approved initiatives that drastically changed how counties assessed properties and collected taxes, 1990's Ballot Measure 5 and 1998's Measure 50. Measure 50 in particular complicated the tax calculation process, requiring assessors' offices to maintain as many as five separate valuations per property – "it tripled our workload," Moes said.

As it adapted to new laws and new technology, the office always strived to make public service a priority, and Moes is proud of how her staff embraced that goal.

"We go the extra mile to help people," she said. "That was a priority of the previous assessor, and we carried on that tradition."

The department worked to explain the often complex processes that went into calculating property owners' tax bills,



Assessor's Office staff cheer Moes during her award presentation June 23.

Moes said. "You can't always please everyone, but we want to make sure that when they leave, they have a good feeling about where their money is going."

The department's efforts were recognized statewide, and earned the county honors as Number 1 in customer service by the state. "I'm very proud of that,"

Moes said.

Following her retirement, Moes' position will not be re-filled – instead, the Central Services director will administer Assessment and Taxation, while the duties of the deputy assessor will be increased, a change that will save an estimated \$103,000 a year.

Plan recommends study for two bridges' repair or replacement

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The study lists a number of chronic problems, including peak-hour traffic back-ups at intersections; safety concerns with uncontrolled access on and off the highway from multiple wide driveways that don't meet ODOT standards; and frequent crashes, particularly by large trucks, on the two bridges. Motorists also use the shoulders for parking in violation of posted restrictions.

In the short term the plan calls for improved signage at the Miles Crossing intersection, and the addition of deceleration and turn lanes at the Airport Road intersection. Longer term, the plan recommends widening the roadway between the two bridges to add a continuous center turn lane, along with curbs, sidewalks,

gutters and bike lanes. Also proposed are roundabouts at the Miles Crossing the Highway 202 intersections to address the safety hazards and traffic back-ups associated with the existing configurations.

The plan also identifies the corridor's two 1920s-era bridges as trouble spots. The narrow widths and poor sight distance lead to frequent collisions and near-misses, especially by large vehicles. The Old Youngs Bay Bridge has a "sufficiency" rating from ODOT of only 42.1 out of 100 – structures with ratings below 50 are considered deficient. The rating for the Lewis and Clark Bridge is 51.6.

As a result, the plan recommends that preliminary studies, including alternatives analysis and engineering and environmental reviews, into the rehabilitation or

replacement of both structures be initiated in the near term.

All the projects are divided into short, middle and long term, with costs estimates and potential funding sources identified, but no specific timetables.

The plan includes updates to the county's land-use code, one of which will require that representatives of ODOT join the pre-application conferences traditionally held between county planning staff and large-project developers. Ed Wegner, Transportation and Development Services Director, told the board that adding the highway department to the planning process up front would help developers learn about all the standards they need to address and avoid costly surprises. To see the complete plan, go to "Land Use Planning" at www.co.clatsop.or.us.