



Clatsop Tidings

A monthly review of County business

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

September 2011

County launches property re-appraisal program

The Clatsop County Assessment and Taxation Department has begun inspecting residential, farm and business properties as part of the first comprehensive reappraisal in the county in many years.

The appraisers physically inspect every property in a selected area to determine the condition of the land and all improvements on each property and to verify the accuracy of county records regarding those properties. The county uses on-site appraisals, coupled with real property sales data and other information, are used by the county to determine a property's real market value.

The A&T Department performs on-site appraisals of new construction and improvements as they are completed. But it has not conducted a comprehensive lot-by-lot appraisal in most of Clatsop County since the 1990s. State law and Oregon Department of Revenue rules require all property to be valued at 100 percent of real market value.

During their inspections, the appraisals will take note of changes to buildings as

well as depreciation or physical defects that could impact the value of the property.

Prior to 1997, counties conducted on-site appraisals on a six-year cycle. But ballot measures 47 and 50, the property tax-limiting initiatives passed by Oregon voters in 1996 and 1997, removed the requirement for regular reappraisal cycles by the county assessor. In place of physical inspections, the A&T Department has relied on sales data and other information to keep valuations current.

But Clatsop County has a very heterogeneous market area – with homes of widely varying quality and value existing side-by-side – that makes it difficult to establish market values without on-site inspections, according to Appraisal Supervisor Michael Grant.

To keep appraisal records more up-to-date, the department is returning to the six- to eight-year appraisal rotation. The first area targeted is the northeast portion of the county – appraisers are currently inspecting properties in Westport and will



Appraiser Chris Leader measures the dimensions of an Astoria residence.

work their way west to Astoria.

Appraisers will visit neighborhoods in vehicles bearing the Clatsop County logo and will carry official county identification. They will go door-to-door to each property in the area – if the owner is home, the appraisers will identify themselves, explain the purpose of the visit and ask if they may view the inside the home or other structure. If an owner de-

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County recognized as 'TsunamiReady'

The National Weather Service has recognized Clatsop County for its ambitious emergency preparedness program with the official TsunamiReady and StormReady designations.

Tyree Wilde, warning coordination meteorologist for the National Weather Service, and NWS meteorologist Steve Todd announced the designation to the board of commissioners Aug. 10. Todd presented Chair Dirk Rohne with a plaque as well as informational signs for posting around the county.

The agency's TsunamiReady and StormReady programs recognize local governments that have worked to reduce the risk from tsunamis and severe weather events through edu-

cation, communications upgrades and planning.

"It's a pretty hard designation to get," Wilde said.

To earn the designation governments must establish an Emergency Operations Center; have multiple avenues for receiving storm warnings and disseminating information to public; have a system for local weather monitoring; host community seminars for promoting public preparedness; create a formal hazardous weather plan including training and exercises.

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Upcoming County Meetings

Planning Commission
Tuesday, Sept. 13, 10 a.m.
Judge Boyington Building

Board of Commissioners
Wednesday, Sept. 14, 10 a.m.
Judge Boyington Building

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

Times subject to change

Sheriff names Kristen Hanthorn to lead parole office

Clatsop County Sheriff Tom Bergin announced Aug. 4 the appointment of Kristen Hanthorn as lieutenant in charge of the Sheriff's Office Parole and Probation Division.

"Kristen is a true leader who has the skills and abilities to handle this division," Bergin said. "She has been a dedicated employee who has come up through the ranks and understands where we need to go as an organization, but more importantly, understands the importance of relationships within our criminal justice system."

Hanthorn joined the Sheriff's Office in 1996 as a deputy and has served as a criminal detective. She was promoted to

sergeant in 2007.

The former Community Corrections Department was placed within the Sheriff's Office earlier this year as part of a reorganization plan that saw the closure of the Transition Center residential facility in Warrenton. Last month Bergin reported to the county board of commissioners that the merger has already resulted in improved communications and increased efficiency between the two offices.

Parole and Probation Division, with a staff of seven parole and probation officers, supervises adult criminal offenders sentenced to probation by a court or released to post-prison supervision from

incarceration. The division supervises approximately 400 clients through home and office visits, administers treatment, cognitive and social skills programs and alternative sanctions including house arrest and community service, and works with the local Drug Court, Family Drug Court and Treatment Court programs.

Parole and probation services are funded primarily through state revenue. Closure of the Transition Center has made available funding that will be redirected toward additional treatment programs and rental of additional jail beds in Tillamook County.

Property taxes unlikely to be affected

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clines, the appraiser will conduct the appraisal from the exterior of the building and/or the nearest right-of-way.

If the owner is not home, the appraiser will leave a yellow door tag containing contact information if the owner wishes to schedule a visit at a future time, and will conduct the appraisal from the building exterior and/or off the property.

During their visits appraisers will look for improvements and additions not noted in current county records and note the quality and age of those changes, as well as look for signs of depreciation or problems such as leaky roofs. They may measure buildings and will take photos.

"We try to be as detailed as possible," said Senior Appraiser Catherine Harper.

A key goal of the appraisal program is updating county records. An on-site appraisal may find that a home listed in the county's property data base as being heated only by wood stove now has a new heating system. On the other hand, appraisals can also reveal that structures still included in the assessment inventory have been removed.

Property owners are not required to allow appraisers on their property. But the A&T Department notes that the more access an appraiser has to the property, the more accurate the valuation for that property will be.

The department also emphasizes that appraisers do not check properties for compliance with building codes or other regulations – they are only evaluating properties for their market value.

Even if an appraisal results in a change in a property's valuation, this will likely not result in a change to the owner's property tax bill. Taxes are calculated on the property's assessed value, not real market value. Measure 50 limited the annual rise in assessed value to 3 percent, and as a result today most properties' real market values are substantially higher than the assessed value.

But maintaining accurate real market values is still important, Grant said. Insurance companies, banks and mortgage companies rely on accurate indicated real market values from the A&T Department.

For more information go to "Property Records/Taxes" on the Clatsop County website, www.co.clatsop.or.us

Plans include expanded EOC, training

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Additional requirements for the TsunamiReady program include identifying hazard zones and developing evacuation and response plans.

Clatsop County joins Coos, Douglas and Tillamook counties as county governments in Oregon designated under the programs. The City of Cannon Beach has also earned the designation.

The county has taken several steps to improve its emergency readiness. They include securing funding for communications upgrades and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training, and an update to its Emergency Operations Plan.

A centerpiece of the county's efforts is the planned construction of a Communications Wing onto the Emergency Operations Center at Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center in Warrenton. Located at the camp's Warrior Hall, the EOC is reserved for the county's use during major natural disasters or other events.