

# 2012-13 Columbia County Property Tax Statement

The 2012-13 Columbia County Assessment and Tax Roll has been certified and property tax bills have been mailed to Columbia County property owners.

Between January 1, 2011 and January 1, 2012, real market values for most residential properties continued to decline, however, at a much lower rate than the previous year. Due to the continued decline, there are more properties with real market values falling below the maximum assessed value, and are therefore paying taxes based on the real market value.

For the 2010-11 tax year, only 725 out of a total of 24529 properties countywide had a real market value lower than their maximum assessed value. For the 2011-12 tax year, this number increased to 6000 out of a total of 24363 properties, and for the 2012-13 tax year, there are a total of 8254 out of 24443. Commercial property owners had the least percentage of properties at 6.03% that are below their maximum assessed value this year, while the Cities of Saint Helens and Columbia City residential property owners had the highest percentage of properties at 68.45% that are below their maximum assessed value.

If the real market value gets closer to the maximum assessed value of properties it may result in a loss

of revenue for some districts due to compression. Compression occurs when a category of government exceeds its consolidated rate limit when applied to the real market value of a property. The consolidated rates are \$5.00/\$1,000 real market value for education and \$10.00/\$1,000 real market value for general government. Consolidated education rates for Saint Helens, Scappoose, Rainier and Vernonia, and consolidated general government rates in the cities of Clatskanie and Rainier exceed their rate limits. If the full consolidated rate applied to the assessed value of a property is more than the consolidated rate limit applied to the real market value, each district's tax in that category is reduced proportionately so that it does not exceed the rate limits. However, if a district also has a voter approved local option levy, the local option levy is compressed before the permanent operating levies. Voter approved bonded debt levies are excluded from rate limitations.

Due to the market decline and minimal new construction in the county, there is very little change in the total assessed value for most taxing districts. This will result in a minimal increase, and in some cases, a reduction in property tax revenue received by most taxing districts during the 2012-13 fiscal year.

A total of \$54,819,790 in property taxes are being billed for the county, cities, schools and special districts. That amount is 1.79 percent more than was billed last year. In addition, a total of \$1,165,118 will be collected for such things as drainage district assessments and the Oregon Department of Forestry's fire patrol special assessments. That amount is 7.16 percent higher than last year.

Countywide, the market value of all taxable property increased from \$5.48 billion to \$5.49 billion, an increase of only 0.25 percent. The total tax assessed value this year is \$4,113,111,742 or 1.35 percent higher than last year.

The first payment of the tax bill is due on Thursday, November 15, 2012. At least one third of the amount is due at that time. Payments can be made at the tax office in the courthouse on Monday through Thursday between the hours of 8:30 am and 5:00 pm. The courthouse county offices are closed to the public on Fridays. For payments that are made using a bank's bill pay service, the tax account number should be noted in the memo field. Payments that are mailed need to be postmarked by the 15th. A return envelope will be included with the statements. The second and third installments are due by February 15, 2012 and May 15, 2012, however the County does not send out statements for

the February or May due dates.

Columbia County is once again providing a way to pay property taxes with E-checks and credit and debit cards through the Point & Pay website. Property Tax payments can be made with your E-checks and credit and debit cards on-line at [www.co.columbia.or.us](http://www.co.columbia.or.us), or by calling 1-866-587-4007. There is a 2.95% charge to use your credit or debit card and a flat fee of \$2.95 for E-checks. This year, arrangements have been made with the St. Helens Community Federal Credit Union (all branches) as an authorized collector for the County to collect only the 2012-13 property tax payments through November 15, 2012.

Property owners who pay the entire amount due by November 15th will receive a three percent discount. If two thirds of the bill is paid by November 15th a two percent discount of the amount paid will be allowed.

Property owners may appeal the value of their property as in past years. However, there would only be a reduction in the taxes due if the market value falls below the assessed value. The deadline for filing an appeal is December 31, 2012. Appeal forms are available from the County Clerk or County Assessors Office, or can be found online at [www.co.columbia.or.us/departments/assessors-office](http://www.co.columbia.or.us/departments/assessors-office).

## Banks Public Library Expansion Update

The Banks Public Library increased in size this summer through a thoughtful reconfiguration. The Phase I Project removed old walls and opened up the entire library 3,000 square feet for increased shelf space and staff and volunteer working areas. The Phase I Project also included expanding patron services by installing an automated check-out system and creating more space for study, research and laptop use. The new construction repurposed and reused doors, windows and other original hardware where possible; the circulation desk was donated to the Aloha Community Library.

Now Phase II is in the works and the push is on to construct a new community meeting room which will be a 1,000 square feet addition to the north of the current library footprint. This much needed space will be used for pre-school story time, community meetings,

an interactive telecommunication "classroom," summer reading activities, a potential out-of-school learning lab program for teens, and for a variety of other library and community needs.

Community meeting space has been determined to be a much needed commodity as local residents seek to gather together for both social and supportive community efforts. It is hoped that the funds to provide a community room will be funded through private foundations and donations from individuals and businesses. The fundraising effort is led by the Banks Library Expansion Team. This is a dedicated group of volunteers that have been meeting for 9 months in a grant writing class sponsored by the Ford Family Foundation, Banks Community Foundation and the City of Banks.

The current goal of the Banks Library Expansion Team is to raise \$10,000 from the local community. The demonstration of community support is an essential component of successful grant applications - and the next step in the Library Expansion Team capital campaign plan. All donations are tax deductible through the Friends of the Banks Library. So far the community has stepped up and donated over \$5,000, fifty percent of the goal!

To help reach the community support goal local vendors are agreeing to promote fundraising "jars," in their businesses. Donations are also accepted at the library located at 42461 NW Market Street in Banks. Please consider donating to this excellent community cause! For more information call Denise Holmes, Director of the Banks Public Library at 503-324-1382.

## Boy Saves Grandmother *continued from front page*

He says he will stay out of school for a few more weeks until his hands are more fully healed.

The fire started in an old wooden shop/garage and quickly spread to the adjacent home. Nearby neighbors watched helplessly as the fire grew while they waited for local firefighters to arrive, worrying that the fire could spread to their structures in the tightly packed neighborhood.


Vernonia Firefighters answered the alarm with three fire engines and a command vehicle. Firefighters were able to enter the home and rescue the family's kittens from the blaze. Also rescued were the family chickens from their coop attached to the home. However, one of the family dogs perished in the fire. Vernonia Firefighters were assisted by mutual aid engines from Mist-Birkenfeld, Scappoose, and Banks. Due to an aggressive fire attack and help from neighboring agencies, firefighters were able to save portions of the home and shop. Damages are estimated to exceed \$100,000. Fire Investigators from the Vernonia Fire and the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office investigated the fire and agree the cause of the fire appears to be accidental.

Seth Cutright says he wants to be a firefighter when he grows up. It is not the first time Seth has been the hero for a family member. This past spring he jumped into a creek and saved his two year old cousin who had fallen into the water.

*An account has been set up at US Bank in Vernonia to assist the Cutright family—Donations can be made to The Cutright Family Relief Fund.*

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