

Property Tax Statements to Be Mailed This Week. Where Will Your Money Go?

The Columbia County Finance and Taxation Department will begin mailing taxpayers their annual statements on October 21, 2022. Payments are due by November 15, 2022.

Property taxes pay for a number of critical services including public safety (law enforcement, fire, and emergency services), parks, schools, public transportation, public defense, elections, community justice, and a host of other vital public services.

Columbia County will collect \$93,852,753 in taxes from businesses and private landowners this year. But most of that amount does not get added to the county budget; only 9.44 percent, or roughly \$8.9 million, goes into the county's general fund. An additional 3.89 percent, or \$3.6 million, goes to the Jail Operation Fund from the local option levy approved by county voters.

Tax dollars disbursed to the general fund largely pay for county law enforcement and public safety, including the Columbia County Sheriff's Office, jail operations, and the district attorney's office. The remainder pays for general county administration, including the assessor's office, land development services, juvenile services, and the county commission.

More than 85 percent of property tax funds collected are distributed to local schools, cities, and special districts, such as those that manage 911 services or soil and water conservation. The fire districts that protect the entire county, from Vernonia to Clatskanie to Scappoose, receive more than 19 percent of the total. But the vast majority of taxes



(47 percent) go towards education, including five school districts, one educational service district, and Portland Community College.

Here's the breakdown:

- **Schools:** \$44,623,284 – 47 percent
- **Fire Districts:** \$17,594,630 – 19 percent
- **Columbia County Government:** \$12,509,900 – 13 percent
- **City Governments:** \$9,001,087 – 10 percent
- **Special Districts:** \$6,831,596 – 7 percent
- **Urban Renewal:** \$1,729,950 – 2 percent
- **Drainage/Special Assessments:** \$1,562,306 – 2 percent
- **TOTAL:** \$93,852,753

Columbia County has 91 tax code areas that are comprised of various combinations of taxing districts that serve that area. Therefore, your property's location dictates the rate and type of taxes you pay. City dwellers can often pay more than rural property owners because of the local

taxes that fund parks, libraries, or local voter-approved bonds, among other benefits.

In May of 2020, voters within the St. Helens School District boundary approved a \$55 million bond to address "health, safety, building systems, and education programs" at the High School. The tax collection to pay this bond was delayed until 2022, as promised to taxpayers when the bond was approved. Taxpayers will begin seeing this on their property tax statements this year. This bond is in addition to the \$49 million bond that was passed in 2016. The increase in tax for those in this district is roughly \$1 per thousand of assessed value. For example, if your assessed value is \$100,000, you would see an additional \$100 in tax.

On the top left of your property tax statement is your code number. To see the exact charges for your specific code, go to the county Assessor's webpage at columbiacountyor.gov and open the 2022-23 Summary of Assessment & Tax Roll. The document contains a list of all agencies in the county that receive the taxes.

ABOUT COLUMBIA COUNTY'S PROPERTY TAXES

The county tax assessor, an elected official, regulates property taxes and bases them on the most recent property value assessment for homes, businesses, and land. **For more information about your Columbia County property valuation, or if you believe your property tax assessment was unfair, contact the county Assessor's office at 503-397-2240. All tax appeals are due to the County Clerk no later than January 3, 2023.**

Bonamici Tours Vernonia Murals *continued from front page*

Bonamici about the courtyard.

Also in attendance was Wela Negelspach from Columbia Economic Team, who helped secure the competitive grant funding for the project, and Tiffany Conklin, Executive Director of the Portland Street Art Alliance (PSAA), who collaborated and found the artists to do the project.

Conklin thanked Organ for her help in identifying potential wall space and business owners interested in participating in the project. "It was a match made in heaven because it gave us boots on the ground who know all the property owners and do the scouting," said Conklin. "Rachael found all the walls, more than we could even paint actually."

"This has improved our downtown corridor immensely," Mayor Hobart told Bonamici.

Conklin led the tour and shared information about the individual artists who created the murals, their painting styles

and favorite types of imagery, the inspiration for their works, and how they were matched with and collaborated with the property and business owners to create art they would appreciate.

"I really support the arts, especially for our students," said Bonamici at the end of her tour. "It can give young people a way to be creative and communicate in different ways. So arts education is really important. And art can be really healing. Right now there is a lot of angst among students who have challenges. We use art to help veterans with PTSD. Art can give students the opportunity to express themselves and can make such a difference in their overall education. Even for students who go on and don't work in the arts, it's still really helpful to have the ability to be creative, and artists do look at things in new ways. We have a lot of challenges we need to solve and we need all the voices around the table, including creative voices."

Vernonia's Voice is published on the 1st and 3rd Thursday.
Look for our next issue on November 3.

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10-6 Tue-Sat
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Columbia Humane Society

Purr-fect Pals



Having been abandoned by her previous family, Chalupa came to CHS as a rescue through Columbia County Animal Control. This sweet girl can be a little shy when you first meet her, but given a chance to settle in, she is very sweet and very friendly. She came in with another cat, her sister Patty, so we assume that she is going to do ok in a home with another cat. We are guessing that she is about 2.5 years old. If you are interested in meeting her we ask that you please email adoption@columbi humane.org. Chalupa's adoption fee is going to be \$150 which includes her current vaccinations, spay, microchip, and treatment for fleas and worms.

Featured Dog



will then schedule a time for you to come and meet with her. Her adoption fee is \$250 which includes her current vaccinations, treatment for fleas and worms, spay, and microchip.

Let's all welcome Tilly to the CHS family. This girl is a delight in just about everything she does. Coming into the shelter at 76 lbs and about 2 years old she will be sure to make you smile. She does well so far with other dogs, but is a little more interested in cats than we would like her to be, so a home without cats would be best for her. If she were to go into a home with another dog it is going to need to be a very kind male that is willing to go with the flow. She is a big girl with a lot of power behind her and might not be suited for a home with little kids that don't have dog experience. She is going to need a solid 6 foot fence in her new home as we know that she can climb chain link fences. Tilly was a stray so we don't know much about her background, but she loves to give kisses and hugs, and does very well being handled by the vet. She will be a great companion for someone who is looking for a pal. If you are interested in meeting Tilly we ask that you please email adoption@columbi humane.org in order to obtain an application. Once you have an approved application on file we