

Polk County Itemizer-Observer

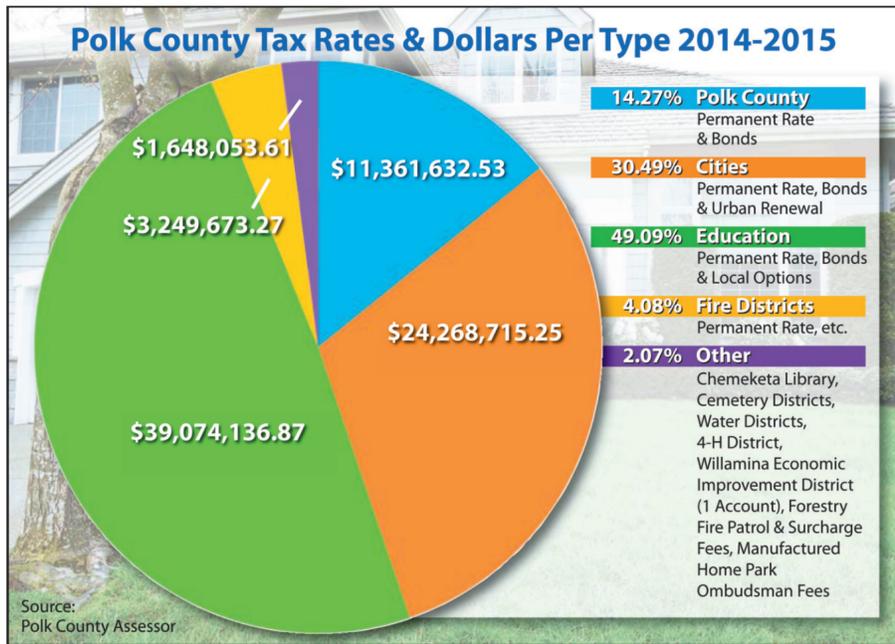
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POLK COUNTY PUBLIC SAFETY LEVY DEBATE



Polk County government's slice of the tax pie is a little more than 14 percent of all taxes collected in the county.

Confusion reigns when it comes to county taxes

Permanent tax rate for Polk government among state's lowest

Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of stories looking at issues and topics that surround the Polk County public safety levy that will appear on the May 19 vote-by-mail ballot.

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — So what is it? Does Polk County have one of the lowest tax rates in the state or one of the highest? If you are concerned about taxes paid just for county government, Polk County does have one of the lowest permanent rates in the state. But there are also those individuals who contend the county has the sixth-highest "effective rate" in the state, based on an Oregon Department of Revenue report.

The effective rate is a real number, \$13.44 per \$1,000 of real market value in 2013-14, the last year statistics were available.



Polk County Assessor Doug Schmidt said the report's definition of the effective rate is the total taxes levied in each county divided by the Measure 5 value (real market value) within each county. The calculation gets a little muddy because not all value included in Measure 5 is real market value. Measure 5 value is used to calculate voter-approved tax limits on specially assessed properties and can be different than real market

value, Schmidt said. He added it also gives the perception that the county is charging a much higher rate than it really is. Bonds and levies passed in individual districts push the effective rate upward. "If districts in a county have more bonds or local option levies, or even higher district permanent rates than the county, that is going to skew the total effective tax rate," Schmidt explained. Schmidt did his own calculation of the effective tax rate just for the county's tax rate and road bond, showing it accounts for only about 11 percent of Polk's total effective rate. Marion County is at 18 percent, Washington County is at 15.8 percent and Yamhill County is at 17.6 percent.

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Volunteers desperately needed

CASA seeks more advocates to look out for children's best interests

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — Mike Barnett is a retired street cop, so he's used to what might shock the average person. But it was the words of a 7-year-old girl that floored him. Barnett, a Dallas resident, is a Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for Polk County. CASAs are advocates for children who have been abused and neglected, and have been removed from their family's home. Appointed by a judge as a party to the case involving the child, CASAs — all volunteers — look out for the best interest of the child.

"We are here for one reason and one reason only, and that is for the child," Barnett said. Barnett took that role seriously, but it was the young girl who made him realize just how much CASAs can mean to the children they are assigned to look after. He said in her case, the situation in her foster home had taken an unfortunate turn. "I was talking to her and she looked at me and I told her, 'You need to tell your case worker this,'" Barnett recalled, referring to her Department of Human Services (DHS) case worker. "She looked up at me with her big brown eyes and said, 'Is she on our side?'"

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Mike Barnett, the assistant director of Polk County Court-Appointed Special Advocates, has been a CASA for six years. He's seen the positive impact CASAs can have.

IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS NEWS

Shellie Friesen-Berry thought she was being original when she asked her friend's parents, Jim and Carolyn Wall, if they were "adopting." According to the couple's daughters, Barb Powers, Debbie McCleery and Jody Lewis, she wasn't the only friend of theirs to ask that question. But really, it seems Jim and Carolyn have adopted all of Dallas — and it shows through their countless contributions to the community, according to Friesen-Berry. The Walls were given the recognition they would never seek Friday night, being named Exceptional Family at the 58th annual Dallas Community Awards.

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FALLS CITY NEWS

In the more than four decades since the first girls basketball team set foot on a court for Falls City High School, no team had ever accomplished something of this magnitude. The Mountaineers punched their ticket to the Class 1A state playoffs for the first time in school history on Thursday after defeating Jewell 47-28 in a conference playoff contest that decided the Casco League's No. 3 seed to state. Even for a team that prides itself on not letting emotion get the best of it, the victory set off a celebration of monumental proportions.

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INDEPENDENCE NEWS

The Grove Community Church is moving into the old Lenora's Ghost location at 114 S. Main St. in downtown Independence. The congregation held services in the Monmouth-Independence YMCA, but has doubled in size, said pastor Andy Johnson. "One day I was walking downtown and noticed they had new 'for lease' signs," Johnson said. "Next thing you know, we're moving." The lease was signed on Jan. 5, the day the Independence Planning Commission approved the conditional use permit required for a church to operate in the downtown area, Johnson said.

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MONMOUTH NEWS

The road to love can be fast and simple, or it can be long and rocky. For Jane Bennet and Mr. Bingley, love clicks in place as easily as puzzle pieces. But for Jane's sister, Elizabeth, and Mr. Bingley's friend, Mr. Darcy, things of the heart are more complicated. Jane, Elizabeth and their three other sisters experience the journey of love, courtship and manners in Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice," presented by Western Oregon University's Department of Theatre and Dance, starting Thursday. Curtain is at 7:30 p.m.

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POLK COUNTY NEWS

The long process of finding new homes for 38 abused and neglected horses and 20 goats began Tuesday. Up until then, the animals, which were seized on Feb. 13 from the 300 block of Pioneer Road near Dallas, were still receiving veterinarian care, said Polk County Lt. Jeff Isham. Animal owner Monica Foster, 41, of Dallas was cited and released on Feb. 18 for first-degree animal neglect. "We're working with a horse rescue out of the Seattle area," he said. "They came down (Sunday) and took photos of each animal and touched the animals."

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THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue
Trio Elf brings its modern style of jazz to Western Oregon University's Smith Music Hall for a performance. 7:30 p.m. \$5-\$8.	It's opening night for the Western Oregon University production of "Pride and Prejudice" at Rice Auditorium. 7:30 p.m. \$7-\$12.	The red-hot Dallas boys basketball team hosts league-leading Silverton in the regular-season conference finale. 7 p.m. \$5.	The final performance of Dallas High School's production of "Our Town" is scheduled at Bollman Auditorium. 7 p.m. \$5.	It's the first Sunday of the month, and that means the Polk Flea Market is open at the Polk County Fairgrounds. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. \$1.	Independence Public Library is hosting a Dr. Seuss Birthday Party for all ages at the library, 175 Monmouth St. 7 p.m. Free.	James2 Community Kitchen hosts meals for everyone in the area every Tuesday at St. Philip Catholic Church in Dallas. 4:30-6 p.m. Free.	
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