

Polk County
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Polk County elected official salaries compared to surrounding counties

	Commissioner	Assessor	Clerk	Sheriff	Treasurer
Benton	\$6,619	\$6,539	N/A	\$8,688	N/A
Lincoln	\$6,474	\$6,655	\$6,338	\$8,115	\$6,338
Linn	\$6,934	\$7,121	\$7,104	\$8,704	\$6,919
Polk	\$5,861	\$6,255	\$5,784	\$7,772	\$5,979
Tillamook	\$6,661	\$6,886	\$6,512	\$7,923	\$7,382
Yamhill	\$6,090	\$6,193	N/A	\$8,020	N/A

Note: Figures are monthly salaries and from the 2013-14 fiscal year

Source: Polk County

In this survey from the 2013-14 fiscal year, salaries for elected officials in Polk County trailed other counties by far.

A comparison of salaries
County officials paid less than peers for years

By **Jolene Guzman**
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — Each spring, Polk County Administrator Greg Hansen puts together a comparison of the salaries of elected officials in five counties surrounding Polk.

Hansen does this as part of preparing the county's budget. State law requires each county to form a "compensation board" to review elected official salaries and recommend changes, if any, each year.

In preparing a recommendation for the board — which consists of the three citizen members of the county's budget committee — he's noticed a pattern. Polk County is falling behind its neighbors in compensating those elected to serve.

The Polk County Board of Commissioners, for example, is paid \$5,861 each in salary and expense allowances, totaling about \$70,000 per year. That is more than twice the average salary for a job in Polk in 2013 of about \$32,000, according to the Oregon Employment Department. But it's also about 12 percent lower than the average amount commissioners in Benton, Lincoln, Linn, Tillamook and Yamhill counties receive.

"We are beginning to lag severely behind," Hansen said.

He said that is not a reflection on the work performance of the county's elected officials, which in addition to the three commissioners, includes the Polk County assessor, clerk, sheriff, treasurer and district attorney. Hansen contends that the group is among the most effective in the state.

Rather, it's the fiscal reality that has them making less money than others in similar posts.

The Polk assessor's salary in fiscal year 2013-14 was about 7 percent behind the five-county average. The clerk and treasurer have fallen about 15 percent behind, while the sheriff's salary is nearly 7 percent behind.

The latter would be worse, if not for state law. Polk County had to adjust Sheriff Bob Wolfe's salary in 2014-15 to comply with a law that requires the sheriff to be the highest paid employee in his office.

District Attorney Aaron Felton is paid by the state. But his colleagues in the other five counties receive an additional stipend ranging from \$1,279 to \$1,975 per month. Felton doesn't receive any additional money from the county.

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Safety corridor decommissioned
ODOT: Has been considering ending corridor status for two years

By **Jolene Guzman**
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has ended the approximately 18-mile safety corridor on Highway 18 through Polk County.

Citing a reduced number of crashes in recent years, ODOT views the step as a success. However, local officials are concerned that without the corridor designation, accident numbers will begin to climb again.

Safety corridors are stretches of highway that have an average crash rate that is higher than that of similar roadways in the state. In order to qualify, the corridor has to consistently have a five-year average crash rate of 110 percent of the state average.

Those roadways designated as safety corridors can



JOLENE GUZMAN / Itemizer-Observer

Discussions may lead to a shorter corridor on Highway 22, in part because of accidents near Doaks Ferry Road.

qualify for additional patrols, increased fines on citations and campaigns to inform drivers of the dangers. Safety projects on these sections of road are given higher priority as well.

Highway 18's corridor was officially "decommissioned"

duce the crash rates," Potter said. "We are encouraged by that trend."

Established in 1996, the corridor has been the subject of several safety projects, including improving access at Spirit Mountain Casino, rumble strips and median barrier installation, and the interchange at Fort Hill Road.

Polk County officials were notified of the decision two weeks before the corridor was decommissioned, Polk County Commissioner Craig Pope said.

Pope said he was unhappy that the county wasn't contacted before the move was made.

"There was no public process," Pope said. "That has been the norm for ODOT. (But) in order to get a safety corridor in place, there has to be a major public process."

See **CORRIDOR**, Page 5A

IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS NEWS

New charter school Dallas Community School will be offering kindergarten when it opens this fall.

The Dallas School Board, the school's charter sponsor, approved an amendment to DCS' charter Monday night expanding enrollment from 1-8 grades to K-8. That change will allow DCS to accept up to 45 more applications from parents interested in enrolling their kindergarteners in the school. "I'm going to go tell a bunch of parents some really good news tonight," said Wendy Sparks, a DCS board member.

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FALLS CITY NEWS

The city of Falls City began its search for a permanent city manager just in time to see its temporary manager leave.

Interim City Manager Jon Hanken submitted his 15-day notice on April 2. His last day will be Friday.

"As you are aware, I have been actively pursuing full-time positions and have tentatively accepted another position," Hanken wrote in his resignation letter.

Hanken, who was hired in October 2014, had been scheduled to fill the post until June, unless he found another job. He did in Lone, Calif.

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INDEPENDENCE NEWS

Teenagers are at that perfect age: nearly adults, but still open-minded to new ideas and fresh perspectives. That's one thing Roseanna Larson loves about teaching them.

"It's a time of tremendous growth and opportunity to have an impact on kids," said Larson, 42, language arts teacher at Central High School.

Larson was named Secondary Teacher of the Year by her peers in the Central Education Association.

Larson is a 1990 graduate of Central High, and was happy to come back to the community she loves.

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MONMOUTH NEWS

By Fourth of July 2016, Monmouth's Main Street Park could have its amphitheater ready for summer concerts, if the council can find a way to pay for it soon.

Mark Fancey, city community development director, said during the April 7 city council work session that if the council decided to pursue grant funding for the project, it could take until 2017 or longer to complete.

Parks system development charges (SDCs) can be used for this project, as well as money from the urban renewal district (URD), Fancey said.

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POLK COUNTY NEWS

Long-time Perrydale teacher Dan Dugan will be the school's assistant principal starting next year.

Dugan will be replacing Perrydale High School/Middle School Principal Shelia McCartney, who after eight years at the school will retire in June. She announced her retirement in March.

Dugan said he has worn "a lot of hats" in his 20 years in the school and community.

Dugan was selected by a hiring committee consisting of members of Perrydale's staff and administration. He said he had a good feeling about his interview with the committee.

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THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK

wed It's Rogue Farms' monthly bingo, open to all ages and to dogs. Food and beverages available for purchase. 6:30 p.m. Free.	thu Dallas boys tennis hosts Lebanon in a league showdown at Dallas High School. Come watch the boys volley. 4 p.m. Free.	fri Fill your tummy at a spaghetti feed benefiting Relay For Life. An auction will raise money for the fight against cancer. 6-9 p.m. \$10.	sat Celebrate the artists of the River Gallery and look at exhibits from 14 local artists on display during April. 5-8 p.m. Free.	sun Are wedding bells in your future? Check out the annual bridal show at the Historic Gentle House. 1-5 p.m. Free.	mon Take a stand in support of crime victims' rights, starting with a ceremony on the steps of the Polk County Courthouse. 12:30 p.m. Free.	tue Learn about taking a trip to China with the M-I Chamber of Commerce at an informational session at the Indy library. 6-7:30 p.m. Free.
Partly cloudy Hi: 60 Lo: 38	Sunny Hi: 69 Lo: 42	Sunny Hi: 72 Lo: 41	Sunny Hi: 67 Lo: 42	Sunny Hi: 71 Lo: 44	Sunny Hi: 72 Lo: 46	Mostly sunny Hi: 70 Lo: 43

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