



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Polk County Administrator Greg Hansen began his career with the county more than three decades ago as a graduate student intern. He's held a number of positions and worked with many elected officials since his first assignment.

County administrator marks 30 years

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — Thirty years ago, Greg Hansen had what could be the shortest job interview of any current Polk County employee.

Now the county administrator, Hansen was seeking a graduate intern position in the general services department.

His interview consisted of three questions, going something like this:

Interviewer: Do you like working with numbers?

Hansen: Yes.

Interviewer: Would you like to work here?

Hansen: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you start tomorrow?

Hansen: Yes.

"I said 'yes' three times and then I was hired," Hansen recalled last week after being presented a 30 years of service award at the Polk County Board of Commissioners meeting Oct. 14.

Hansen worked his first day with Polk County on Oct. 1, 1985, and has been

there since — and yes, he still likes working with numbers.

In fact, he can count the number of elected officials he's worked for and with since becoming county administrator in 1997: two county clerks, two assessors, two sheriffs, three treasurers, 10 elected commissioners, and one appointed commissioner who served on the board twice.

The department where Hansen started his career, general services, was appropriately named. At the time, it worked with all departments supervising facilities maintenance, county vehicles, central purchases and making sure office equipment functioned properly.

He's held a number of positions on a temporary basis while with the county, including tax collector, Grand Ronde Sanitary District manager, and West Valley Housing Authority director.

In 1997, he used that variety of experience as background for his most recent career move — "recent"

being a relative term since it's been nearly 20 years — becoming the county's administrator.

"I was doing a lot of the job anyway. I felt I was the right person for the job," he explained when asked why he decided to apply for the post. "I knew enough about every department that it made sense."

He hasn't regretted that decision, adding he's never seriously considered moving to a larger county.

"I truly believe Polk County is pretty special. Not only in its location, but we aren't too small that there isn't anything going on, but not too big where we are a bureaucratic, cluttered mess," he said.

"I go to administrator meetings and a lot of those meetings include (other administrators) whining about their elected officials and how dysfunctional they are," he continued. "We don't have those problems."

Hansen has often said Polk's elected officials are among the best in the state.

He extends that praise to his administrative team.

"I had a sports background growing up, and the better team you surround yourself with, the better the results," he said.

The smallish size of the county has another benefit in that he has the time to leave his office and visit departments and employees often.

"I don't have to sit at my desk and administer," he said. "I get to go out in the field with public works or go down and talk to the sheriff. That ability to always have something different at my disposal — I think I probably just get bored doing one thing — that allows me to stay on top of things."

Hansen plans to "stay on top of things" for a while longer.

"I will retire sometime. When that time will be, I don't know," he said. "As long as I'm happy, I will probably continue to work. I will probably want to ensure I will leave it in as good a place as I can."

Dallas SD to clarify gun policy for staff

Current policy not clear on whether staff are allowed to carry in schools

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — The Dallas School District is clarifying its policy on staff members possessing firearms at work after questions arose in the wake of the Umpqua Community College shooting earlier this month.

"The recent incident at Umpqua Community College, that's generated some additional questions around arming staff," Superintendent Michelle Johnstone said.

When district staff looked up the policy to answer those questions, Johnstone said the policy was unclear if staff and members of the public could possess firearms at schools.

"I would say it's gray," she said.

The district's policy is clear that students cannot carry guns or other weapons at school, but it has been practice to allow adults, including staff, with concealed carry permits to possess firearms in Dallas schools.

The concern is that the district policy doesn't clearly say that. In light of recent concerns, the board would like to eliminate confusion, which stems from the interchange between separate policies and state and federal law.

Dallas' "public conduct on school property" policy states: "No person on district property will bring, possess, conceal or use a weapon as prohibited by board policy JFCJ — 'Weapons in the Schools and State and Federal Law.'"

That policy only mentions students, not employees or members of the public.

"I read it and I thought it meant that nobody could

have a gun on school property," Board Chairwoman Lu Ann Meyer said. "I personally think it's totally confusing."

According to the Oregon School Boards Association, under Oregon law local boards have the discretion to allow or prohibit guns on school property.

Federal law through the "Guns Free School Zone Act" prohibits the possession of a gun on school property or within 1,000 feet of school grounds.

Another federal law, "Guns Free School Act" requires schools to adopt a "zero tolerance policy" and expel students who possess firearms at school.

However, Oregon law trumps federal law in this instance, allowing guns on school property if the owner has a concealed weapons permit. Districts can decide if employees are afforded similar rights.

State law also prohibits students from possessing firearms at school.

Board members indicated they wouldn't want to change current practice.

"We shouldn't treat our staff any different than a member of the public," board member Mike Blanchard said.

Meyer said if it is the position of the board to allow properly permitted employees to carry firearms, that the policy should say that without ambiguity. She suggested policy revisions should be presented to the board for approval.

"Am I hearing the board say that we don't want to require, but we want to allow, any district staff that has met the requirements for carrying concealed to be allowed to do that?" she asked. "Now, how do we get our policy to match that?"

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BOC to name interim sheriff

Itemizer-Observer staff report

POLK COUNTY — The Polk County Board of Commissioners will name an interim sheriff at its regular meeting at 9 a.m. on Oct. 28 in the conference room at the Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St.

Polk Detective Sgt. Mark Garton, of Dallas, and Yamhill County Patrol Sgt. Todd Whitlow, of Sheridan, applied for the temporary post and were interviewed last week. Both have filed to be elected sheriff in the May 2016 primary.

The candidate the board selects will take over the job on Dec. 1 after retiring Sheriff Bob Wolfe takes his leave of the office on Nov. 31. The interim sheriff will serve until January 2017, when the newly elected sheriff takes over.

OSP investigating fatal accident

Itemizer-Observer staff report

WILLAMINA — Oregon State Police troopers responded to a report of a motor vehicle crash at the Highway 18B off ramp on Oct. 11.

Senior Trooper Chad Drew said Bradley Jones, 47, of Portland, was driving a 1999 Chevy Suburban eastbound on Highway 18 when he took the 18B exit at a high rate of speed. Jones drove off the roadway, but came back onto the ramp near Yamhill Road. The vehicle then traveled east off the roadway and struck a utility pole and large tree before coming to rest down a steep embankment.

Jones was pronounced deceased at the scene. He was not wearing a safety belt. Alcohol may have been a contributing factor. OSP is investigating the crash and was assisted by the West Valley Fire Department, Yamhill County Sheriff's Department, Oregon Department of Transportation and Portland Gas and Electric.

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