

Business Notes

State offers answers for common questions about tax returns

As the deadline for filing Oregon income taxes draws nearer, the Oregon Department of Revenue has some pointers that can help taxpayers with the completion and filing of their returns. Taxpayers can find the answers to many of their tax questions in the tax booklets or on the department Web site at

www.dor.state.or.us

The department's automated system is also available 24 hours a day.

Here are a few tax tips based on some of the most common questions taxpayers ask:

- Taxpayers who did not receive their W-2s or who need

replacement copies must contact their employers for this information. The department does not receive copies of W-2s.

- Taxpayers who make quarterly estimated tax payments should use a coupon to ensure that their payments are credited correctly to their accounts.

- Payments for 2001 taxes due or payments for 2002 estimated taxes must be paid by check or money order. The department cannot take credit card payments for these years. The department can take credit card payments for prior years or help set up payment plans if a person is unable to pay.

- Taxpayers who need to file

an extension because they are unable to complete their returns by April 15, must pay the amount of taxes that they anticipate owing.

"One of the most frequently asked questions is 'Where is my refund?'" said Joan Linn, manager of the Tax Services Unit. "Taxpayers do not need to talk to a Tax Services representative to get this information," Linn explained. "This information is available 24 hours a day on our automated system. The automated system needs three pieces of information to process the request: Social Security number, the type of tax return filed (40, 40S, 40N or 40P) and the amount of the expected

refund. If the department has begun processing the return, the message will give an estimated processing time."

From April 1 through April 15, the extended hours for Tax Services representatives are 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Taxpayers can contact a representative or use the automated system at 1-800-356-4222 (within Oregon only) or 503-378-4988.

Spanish speakers may call 503-945-8618. For TTY (hearing or speech impaired only), the toll free number within Oregon is 1-800-886-7204. The TTY number is answered by machine; a representative will return the call.

County requests public input on Periodic Review of state Goal 5

State law requires all counties and cities to comply with the Oregon Statewide Planning Goals, which implement the State's land use program. There are 19 Goals, ranging from Housing to Natural Resources. To ensure that the Goals are complied with, the legislature instituted a formal procedure called "periodic review" that must be revisited, usually every 10 years. Columbia County is currently reviewing Planning Goal 5.

Goal 5 requires an inventory of the location, quality and quantity of streams and riparian corridors, wetlands and wildlife habitat. Columbia County completed the inventory in July, 2001.

The County must now decide which method of protection to apply. The "site-specific" approach, which would require a thorough and costly analysis, would likely lead to extensive protection measures. The "safe harbor" approach represents the state's minimum protection measures, which are currently applied by Columbia County in ways such as development setbacks from streams and wetlands.

A public meeting to discuss natural resource protection measures will be held at 6:30 p.m. on April 8, in the Columbia County Courthouse, Third Floor, Room 351, in St. Helens.

The final step in the periodic review process is to update the existing land use code and Comprehensive Plan to reflect the selected resource protection measures. The Comprehensive Plan is the guiding document for local land use planning, and the County desires input regarding local issues and concerns.

In addition, the Federal Government recently listed various species of salmon as threat-

ened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Most of those species have identified habitat in the Columbia River and/or its tributaries. Therefore, in addition to the state requirements, the County must develop a salmon protection program under Federal law.

Anyone interested in participating in the periodic review process and/or Salmon Protection Plan process, or who wishes to submit comments, may contact Matt Laird at 503-397-1501, send written comments to the Dep't. of Land Development Services, 230 Strand St., St. Helens, OR 97051, or attend the public meeting.

Gubernatorial candidates invited to PCC forums

Two gubernatorial candidate forums will be held at Portland Community College (PCC) Rock Creek Campus to help voters prepare for the May primary election. The free events are hosted by PCC students and are open to the public. There will be no charge for on-campus parking.

The Republican Candidate Forum will be held Friday, April 19 at 6:30 p.m. in Building 3 - Forum area.

The Democrat Candidate Forum will be held Friday, April 26 at 6:30 p.m. in Building 3 - Forum area.

To increase access, sign-

language and Spanish interpretations will be available.

Every candidate who is in the primary race has been invited to attend the forum.

For more information, call 503-614-7442 or send email to Pccforum@Yahoo.com

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