

Columbia County property tax statements will soon be mailed

Columbia County Assessor, Sue Poling, has certified the 2009-10 Columbia County Assessment and Tax Rolls, and over 28,000 property tax bills will soon be mailed to Columbia County property owners.

Owners of residential property throughout Columbia County will see a decrease in their real market values ranging from seven to 16 percent, depending on location. However, Poling warns, taxpayers should not expect to see a decrease in their tax bills. While Oregon's property tax system has limited assessed values to a predictable increase of three percent, even during the years in which real market values were exceeding a 10% growth, many taxpayers will still be surprised to find an increase in their assessed value when their real market value has dropped. Since the tax assessed value of a property is the lower of the real market value or the maximum assessed value, the average real market values for most residential properties would

have to fall at least 30% more before property owners would see a decrease in their tax bills.

Real market values of residential property located within the city limits of Saint Helens and Columbia City were recalculated this year, and property owners in these areas will not see the same percentage difference in real market values among neighbors. A recalculation does not include a physical inspection of property, Poling explained, but rather is a computer assisted recalculation of values by analyzing and using current market data and local cost modifiers. While this method does not identify properties that may have more or less than typical maintenance, it provides the most efficient and accurate method of valuing properties at 100% of real market value each year between physical reappraisals.

Although most property owners can expect a predictable 3% increase in their property tax bill each year, there is another source of change.

Whether a property owner's tax bill varies more than three percent is largely the result of changes in local option and bonded debt levy rates, which are not limited by Measure 50. This is why the percentage change is not the same throughout the county.

Two new bond measures were passed this year, Scappoose School District voters approved \$33,300,000 in general obligation bonds to upgrade, expand and construct schools and Portland Community College District voters approved \$374,000,000 in general obligations bonds to expand, modernize and construct facilities, and upgrade technology. In addition, this is the first year that Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District will levy an operating tax of 0.10 per thousand as approved by voters last November. The affect of these rate changes on properties that have had no physical changes over the last year, according to Poling, is that the owner of an average residential

property in Clatskanie may only see a 2.5% increase in their tax bill, whereas, the owner of an average residential property in Scappoose may see up to a 17% increase in their tax bill.

A total of \$53,776,900 in property taxes is being billed for the county, cities, schools and special districts. That amount is 7.83 percent more than was billed last year. In addition, a total of \$990,131.54 will be collected for such things as drainage district assessments and the Oregon Department of Forestry's fire patrol special assessments. That amount is 11 percent lower than last year.

County wide, the market value of all taxable property decreased from \$7.25 billion to

\$5.72 billion, a decrease of 21 percent. This decrease not only reflects the decline in residential real market values, but also reductions in large industrial real market values. The total tax assessed value this year is \$3,993,491,030 or 3.30 percent higher than last year.

The first payment of the tax bill is due by November 16, 2009. Payments that are mailed need to be postmarked by the 16th. At least one third of the amount is due at that time. The second and third installments are due by February 16, 2010 and May 17, 2010, however the County does not send out statements for the February or May due dates.

Property owners who pay
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KAY: Domestic abuse program, work crew were terms of probation

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cer, a role that is one of the highest positions of public trust in our society, to manipulate and intimidate this victim, to the State is indicative of his potential dangerousness."

At sentencing, Kay was placed on 18 months probation. As part of the terms of his probation he was ordered to complete the "Crossroads" domestic abuse program (a nine month program) and perform 80 hours of work on a work crew supervised by the Corrections Division or the Sheriff's Department. Community service was specifically not allowed in lieu of a work crew.

Public records *The Independent* received from the Department of Public Safety, Standards and Training (DPSST) included information about Kay's previous acquittal for assault. The record stated that DPSST had received a complaint in 2005 about Kay's involvement in domestic violence "some years earlier", but did not locate any records on OJIN (a Register of Actions and Judgments for the State of Oregon's Judi-

cial Department). *The Independent* was told by Lincoln County Circuit Court that, even though contempt is a criminal charge, the restraining order was a civil matter and the criminal conviction was placed in the civil file. This apparently is why Kay's conviction was previously unknown to DPSST or the Vernonia Police Department. This information has been sent to DPSST. However, due to a large number of complaints about police across the state, and because DPSST has only one investigator, it is unknown when they will be able to address this issue.

When asked about how this conviction affects Kay's promotion to Captain, or his qualifications to be a Vernonia Police Officer, Police Chief Frank Grace said, "It's a personnel issue," and will need to be looked at by the city's attorney.

City Administrator Bob Young's response to the issue was, "It's irrelevant, it happened nine years ago." When asked "What if it had been your daughter?" He said, "I don't know."

BOND: Plans will allow future expansion

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expected to come from a combination of grants, stimulus dollars, state money and donations.

When completed, the schools will have 137,000 square feet, compared to 118,000 now, and will house up to 750 students. The district currently has just about 600 students but, before the 1996 flood, had 720 students one year. Additional build-out potential is available in the plans to house up to 1,000 students as the district grows.

Many features of the school will be available for the community's use, as well, including planned community garden space.

The planned construction schedule has students in the new schools starting with the 2011-2012 school year.

The results of the bond measure election will be available by 8:45 p.m. on November 3, though they won't be posted on the county's website until the next morning. *The Independent* will print the results of the bond election in our November 5 issue.

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