

All-Day Budget Meetings

September 17, 2025

9:04 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Pollock, Commissioner Swope, County Manager Ryan Barrett, Becky Butler, Commissioner Brummer (10:30 a.m.), Superior Court Judge Andrew Toynbee, Court Administrator Dakota Harmanson, Accounting Specialist Stacey Werner, District Court Judge RW Buzzard, Court Administrator Monique Shedd, Risk Director Becky Butler, Risk Management Specialist Sam Allen, Safety Officer Nathaniel Barr, DEM Deputy Director Erika Katt, Emergency Management Planner Justin Bushnell, Noxious Weed Control Program Coordinator Charles Edmonson, Auditor Larry Grove, Chief Deputy Auditor Graham Gowing, Chief Deputy Auditor Tom Stanton, Assessor Ross Nielson, Chief Deputy Assessor Lynn Richard, Public Works Director Geoff Soderquist, County Engineer Wes Anderson, Solid Waste Services Manager Rocky Lyon, Deputy Director Tina Correia, Solid Waste Office Manager Kristen Buckman, Utility Services Manager Anders Pollman, Fleet Services Manager Tim Mixer

Citizens Budget Committee members: Usha Sahadeva Brooks, Tim Wood, Bill Serrahn, Paul Crowner, Michael Blessing

Guest(s): Jacob Moore, unnamed guest

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Public comment: None.

Superior Court (9:04 a.m. start time)

Elected and representatives present: Judge Andrew Toynbee, Court Administrator Dakota Harmanson and Accounting Specialist Stacey Werner

Details: The Superior Court representatives said Superior Court is requesting an additional \$6,900 to cover increased costs for professional services and copier leases and an additional \$45,435 to cover increased costs for court security after grant funding came in lower than in previous years.

At 9:27 a.m., Commissioner Pollock recessed the meeting until 10:30 a.m.

District Court (10:32 a.m. start time)

Elected and representative present: Judge RW Buzzard and Court Administrator Monique Shedd

Details: Not requesting any increases.

Judge Buzzard said District Court has seen a 95.6 percent increase in the number of traffic infraction cases filed. He and Becky Butler discussed reimplementing a process for promissory notes, through

which the county would secure penalties from individuals who initially qualified for indigent defense and then saw a change in financial circumstances.

Judge Buzzard said state law indicates the initiating office (Prosecuting Attorney's Office or Sheriff's Office) should bear the costs for interpreters.

The discussion ended at 10:57 a.m.

Risk Management (10:58 a.m. start time)

Director and representatives present: Risk Director Becky Butler, Risk Management Specialist Sam Allen and Safety Officer Nathaniel Barr

Details: Becky Butler said skyrocketing insurance premiums and expanded liability windows have increased costs for Risk. Becky said staff is looking to increase workers' comp and general liability rates countywide, increases that will be partially offset by decreased Department of Retirement Services rates.

The commissioners directed staff to move forward with the assessment.

Emergency Management (11:23 a.m. start time)

Representative(s) present: DEM Deputy Director Erika Katt, Emergency Management Planner Justin Bushnell

Details: Erika Katt said Emergency Management proposes leaving rates for the county's partner cities and the town of Pe Ell unchanged at \$6.30 per person.

At 11:54 a.m., Commissioner Brummer recessed the meeting until 1:30 p.m.

Noxious Weeds (1:30 p.m. start time)

Representative present: Noxious Weed Control Program Coordinator Charles Edmonson

Details: Program Coordinator Charles Edmonson said the Noxious Weed Control program is requesting a \$43,268 use of fund balance.

Auditor's Office (1:55 p.m. start time)

Elected and representatives present: Auditor Larry Grove, Chief Deputy Auditor Graham Gowing and Chief Deputy Auditor Tom Stanton

Details: No requests for additional funding or staff.

Commissioner Brummer left at 1:56 p.m., and the discussion ended at 2:12 p.m.

Assessor's Office (2:13 p.m. start time)

Elected and representative present: Assessor Ross Nielson and Chief Deputy Assessor Lynn Richard

Details: Assessor Ross Nielson and Chief Deputy Assessor Lynn Richard reviewed the Assessor's Office request for a \$257,400 budget increase to cover the following:

- \$4,200 for a copier lease
- \$100,500 for professional services and software maintenance
- \$3,000 for postage
- \$2,300 for training
- \$2,046 for travel for training
- \$30,000 for sick and vacation leave payouts for two pending retirements
- \$115,350 for annual fees for Tyler Tax subscription

Ross discussed results of an agreement signed with Darigold in August. The agreement reduces by \$70 million the county's property value assessment of Darigold's manufacturing facility on Chehalis Avenue.

At 2:43 p.m., Commissioner Pollock recessed the meeting until 3:20 p.m.

Public Works (3:24 p.m. start time)

Elected / director and representative(s) present: Public Works Director Geoff Soderquist, County Engineer Wes Anderson, Solid Waste Services Manager Rocky Lyon, Deputy Director Tina Correia, Solid Waste Office Manager Kristen Buckman, Utility Services Manager Anders Pollman and Fleet Services Manager Tim Mixer

Roads budget: Public Works Director Geoff Soderquist expressed concerns regarding Secure Rural Schools funding. He noted that even when fully funded, projects still require county money for right of way purchases. He said the bulk of the county's bridges are aging and will be increasingly expensive to repair or replace. Geoff said rising costs and shrinking revenues have led him to recommend a 1 percent levy increase – plus banked capacity – for Roads. Geoff noted that the state's 49 counties oversee 60 percent of the state's roads but receive only 40 percent of the funding the state collects.

Solid Waste: Rocky Lyon reviewed Solid Waste's budget. Rocky noted that recycling is environmentally friendly but affects the fees collected.

Water systems: Geoff Soderquist said the county operates two public water systems: Middle Fork and Vader Water. Geof said the Middle Fork water system's rate payers currently are being subsidized by the general fund to cover the costs of the system. He noted that the Vader water system was received in a receivership, and oversight potentially could return to the city.

Fleet: Geoff Soderquist said he will need to know how many Sheriff's Office vehicles to order for 2026.

Airports: Geoff discussed the two airports the county oversees, with one in Toledo and the other in Packwood. He noted there are no revenues associated with the Packwood airport.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.