

County Manager / 2025 Legislative Kickoff

July 29, 2024

9:35 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Pollock, Commissioner Swope, County Manager Ryan Barrett, Mindy Brooks, Becky Butler, Meja Handlen, Doug Carey, Josh Metcalf, Josh Weiss, Troy Nichols, Assessor Ross Nielson, Treasurer Arny Davis, Matt Jaeger

Guest(s):

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Public comment: None.

State of the state: Troy Nichols and Josh Weiss said the upcoming legislative session will be a long one, complicated by the gubernatorial election. They noted a “no-new-programs” budget is expected and that it will be a lame duck budget from outgoing Gov. Jay Inslee.

Josh and Troy said previous asks that would be a hard sell this time include funding for senior services and accounting software.

The group discussed potential topics for upcoming legislative asks, including:

- The need for a proviso regarding I-5 interchange.
- Water system receiverships.

Josh and Troy said the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) will take the lead regarding the statewide need for indigent defense funding. They noted that the state has earmarked \$301 million for 525 Community projects, such as the equestrian center.

The group discussed the Packwood sewer project, for which the county has \$8 million but faces costs estimated at \$16 million to \$20 million.

Department heads outlined possible topics, including the following:

Mindy Brooks

- Comp Plan funding to help fire, water and school districts plan for growth
- Need statewide study about rural counties and housing for rural jobs
- Packwood sewer

Josh Metcalf

- Infrastructure maintenance funding
- Packwood sewer

Meja Handlen

- Foundational Public Health Services – providing direct services for youth, veterans and seniors

Commissioner Swope

- Better clarity from state, not Commerce, about use of funds
- Better help for homeowners, not just renters

Doug Carey

- Elevator modernization

Treasurer Arny Davis

- Legislative fix regarding income approach to personal property tax
- Department of Natural Resources funding for schools

Assessor Ross Nielson said Arny Davis misspoke about the income approach for personal property tax.

The commissioners discussed traffic needs along the I-5 corridor, including the following areas:

- Napavine exit
- Chamber Way
- Winlock exit

Josh and Troy said they would like an outline of the county's legislative priorities prior to the Legislative Roundtable so they can discuss the requests with the delegation prior to the Sept. 23 meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 10:31 a.m.