

County commissioners set special hearing to realign shrinking 2010 budget

Clark County commissioners Monday tentatively set a special public hearing Tuesday, June 16, to realign the county budget through 2010 to prevent a deficit related to an economic downturn that has proved steeper than expected when the 2009-2010 budget was adopted in early December.

“We knew this was going to be a tough budget cycle, but it is turning out to be tougher than tough,” said commissioners’ board chairman, **Marc Boldt**.

“I am personally calling on our staff, contractors, community partners and citizens to be both strong and patient in working together to pull us through this difficult time,” Boldt added.

According to county administrator **Bill Barron**, the plan is aimed at adjusting to lower revenue forecasts, budgeting for reduced workload in Community Development and preparing for increased expenses in some categories, such as unemployment compensation.

Key parts of the proposal will include, in the Department of Community Development, a \$5 million combination of fee increases and staff reductions (about 20) and in other General Fund departments, a \$4.5 million reduction (about 3 percent) in general fund support for all departments from July 2009 through December 2010. Departments will work to minimize the impacts on jobs and services—Real Estate Excise Tax: \$3.6 million redirected to pay on previous capital investments; delay future capital investments; reduction of \$2.7 million in investments in the Public Employees’ Retirement System; move \$2.5 million from the road fund to pay for county Sheriff’s Office road patrols; \$876,000 in Development Engineering fee increases; and \$500,000 reduction in the county motor fuel budget.

County employment unchanged in April

Clark County nonfarm employment was unchanged in April at 133,700 jobs. On a seasonally-adjusted basis, employment declined by 600 jobs. Since last April, the county has lost 1,500 jobs (-1.1 percent), according to **Scott Bailey**, regional economist for the state Department of Employment Security.

Construction, manufacturing, retail trade, business services, and leisure & hospitality collectively added zero jobs over the month, when seasonal hiring would normally have totaled 800 jobs, Bailey says.

Bailey says at the state level, employment statewide was revised downward by about 7,000 jobs based on preliminary tax returns from employers in the fourth quarter of the year. Washington lost about 20,000 jobs in March and 9,900 jobs in April. The April layoffs were concentrated in three industries: construction, manufacturing, and business services. Over the past twelve months, payrolls have been slashed by 116,000 jobs, almost four percent. The unemployment rate remained at 9.1 percent.

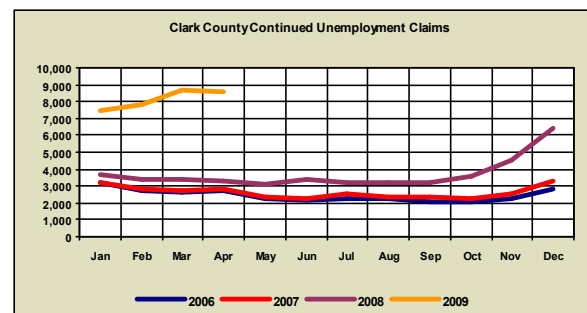
Bailey adds, Oregon lost 9,500 jobs in April, slightly less than in March and considerably fewer than February, but still a considerable amount. The unemployment rate inched up a tenth of percent to 12.0.

Nationally, the preliminary April job loss was smaller than the 600,000+ over the past few months, Bailey says, adding, but consider that hiring started for the 2010 Census, adding 62,000 to federal payrolls—adjust for that, and we’re back at 600,000+. Consider also that February and March were both revised downward by 30,000

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Sub-debs Kailani and Bryana , daughters of former Vancouver residents Scott and Merry Cromack vacationing in Panama City Beach Florida earlier this month.



jobs.

According to Bailey, one month does not a trend make and, in any case, the economy is getting worse. Nobody's really sure yet if it's getting worse faster or slower.

County road construction supporting local jobs

Last year Clark County Public Works paid private contractors more than \$24 million dollars to build new roads, parks and stormwater management facilities. These funds supported an estimated 250 private sector jobs within the construction and related services industry, according to **Heath Henderson**, Public Works Engineering Program manager.

This year, the county expects spending will be similar to 2008, including \$2.5 million of federal economic stimulus funds destined for a road improvement project on NE 99th Street, Henderson says.

Project funds come from a variety of sources including local property taxes, gas tax revenues and state and federal agencies. "Local dollars are reinvested to meet the local infrastructure needs of the community," Henderson adds.

News briefs

After a Monday executive session, the Battle Ground School Board voted 3-2, with **Cecil Shlecht** and **Richard Kent** dissenting, to renew Superintendent **Shonny Bria**'s contract. No details of her contract will be discussed until negotiations are complete. <> United Way of the Columbia-Willamette raised \$19.64 million in its annual community campaign, topping last year's totals by 2 percent, reports **Marc Levy**, CEO and president of the four-county organization. The City of Vancouver employees were named top contributors in Clark County.

Calendar

A Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours program is at Port of Camas-Washougal commissioners meet at 5:30 p.m. today in port offices at 24 S A Street, Washougal. <> The award-winning Battle Ground High School Advanced Jazz Band and the school's Vocal Jazz Ensemble and Intermediate Jazz Band will perform in concert at 7 p.m. this evening in the Battle Ground High School cafeteria. Admission is \$2.

Tuesday on the air

Bravo! Vancouver: Symphonic Firsts (5/17)—4:30 p.m. CVTV

Vancouver Land Use hearings (live)—7 p.m. CVTV

L.A. Angels at Seattle Mariners (live)—7 p.m. FSN, KTRO, KUIK

Broadway Baby: Act 1—7 p.m. FVTV

Broadway Baby: Act 2—8 p.m. FVTV

Town Tabloids and the Weather

Mary Keltz generating hard news. <> **Dean Sutherland** knows good idea when he hears one. <> **Jim West** seminar planning. <> **Despo Varkados** making a deal. <> **Geoff Knapp** fixing things in a hurry. <> **Rick Lace** suffering corrections. <> **Tuesday**, pouring down rain in early afternoon, 46-58. **Wednesday**, sun returns, 45-70. **Thursday**, mostly sunny, 48-80.