



Wasco County Planning Department
 "Service, Sustainability & Solutions"

2705 East 2nd Street, The Dalles, OR 97058
 (541) 506-2560 wcplanning@co.wasco.or.us
www.co.wasco.or.us/planning

CONNECTIONS

Bridging the gap between community & planning

In This Issue

- [WASCO COUNTY WEB MAP](#)
- [NEW WASCO COUNTY PLANNING STAFF](#)
- [IMPORTANT DATES](#)
- [TOUGH QUESTIONS?](#)

Quick Links

- [Newsletter Archive](#)
- [Wasco County Planning Home](#)
- [Wasco County Home](#)

Staff

- John Roberts**
Director
- Joey Shearer**
Senior Planner
- Dawn Baird**
Associate Planner
- Mike Weidmann**
Associate Planner
- Brenda Jenkins**
Planning Coordinator
- Kate Foster**
Code Compliance Officer

Join Our List

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

Disclaimer

Issue: #6

March 2013

Message from the Director:

It's been almost ten-months since our last issue of the department's newsletter "Connections." There are a lot of reasons for that, but as George Washington said, "It is better to offer no excuses than a bad one." In light of our first president's advice, it still remains our department's goal to publish three newsletters a year to keep our stakeholders informed and engaged.

A lot has happened in our department since May 2012, and we've experienced a lot of change (both internally and externally). Internally, in September, our department unfortunately lost two great staff members. However, by early November, we were fortunately able to fill those vacancies with two great new hires. (Read more about Michael Weidmann and Kate Foster below.) They're doing a superb job of meshing with our supportive and talented current staff. Externally, we continued to focus on maintaining a high level of customer service, updated our department's strategic plan, and completed an audit of our development review processes and procedures in December. The audit was conducted by a professional planning firm (Angelo Planning Group) with involvement from the county's Development Review Advisory Committee. The result was identification of 24 recommended strategies and actions, ranging from suggested development code amendments to ideas on how to improve communications/information sharing. In my opinion, all of the recommended strategies and actions identified in the audit are probably necessary and important for our department and community to address.

In light of the audit, I feel like the New Year revealed some significant challenges. While some are exciting and welcome, it's also clear that there are too many projects to pursue, too little staff and greater demands on our time. But who's complaining!? As stated by "Brave New World" author Aldous Huxely, "Several excuses are always less convincing than one." Instead of dwelling on problems (e.g., shortcomings), our department has developed a fresh perspective in regard to challenges - a "forward focus" that helps support productivity by concentrating resources on what works instead of what hasn't.

The Wasco County Planning Department has provided this electronic newsletter free of charge. The items contained herein are published as submitted and are provided for general information purposes only. Readers should not rely solely on this information, but should make their own inquiries before making any decisions.

We work to maintain up-to-date information, however, no responsibility is accepted for any errors or omission or results of any actions based upon this information. If you have any questions regarding any of these items, contact the organizational representative of that source/information.

The beginning of 2013 allowed us time to align our department's work program priorities with seven vital projects we think will bring the most value to our operational procedures. More importantly we believe these priorities emulate and balance our department's staffing levels, core values, process improvement needs, customer service and statewide/legal planning requirements. These special projects include: 1) finishing the update to our comprehensive plan; 2) updating the planning department website; 3) updating and streamline the planning department's applications and accompanying handouts; 4) streamlining our internal permitting software; 5) amending our fee schedule; 6) updating our code compliance ordinance; and 7) initiating an update to our Land Use and Development Ordinance, focusing on Chapters 1, 2 and 3.

Thinking about how to accomplish and plan for all these projects, particularly when our more important function is processing applications in a timely manner, is really difficult. However, as the saying goes, "Difficulty is the excuse history never accepts." So, we are doing our best, focusing on ways to improve efficiencies and your experience with us.

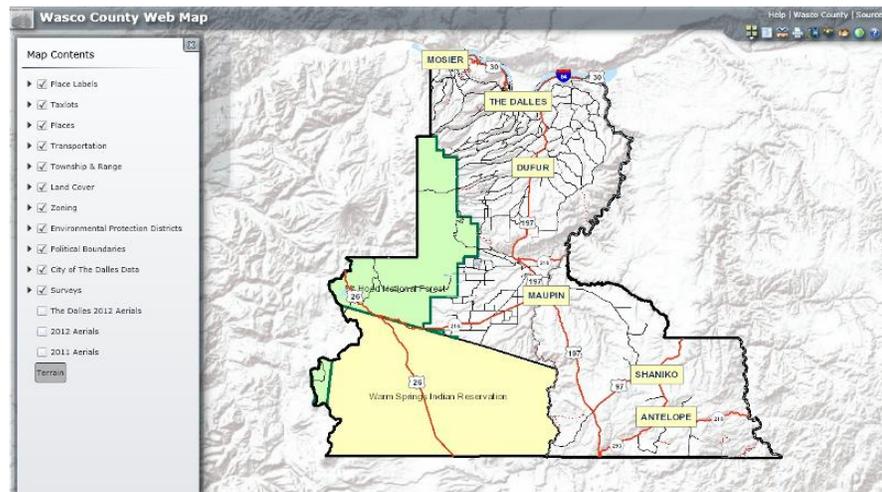
Please read this newsletter and anticipate getting your next one in August.



John Roberts, AICP
Planning Director

WASCO COUNTY LAUNCHES INTERACTIVE WEB BASED MAPPING TOOL

Wasco County has recently updated their Geographic Information System ("GIS") through developing an interactive web based mapping tool. Using Hood River County's Web Map Online Parcel Viewer as a template the new mapping tool took nearly a half-year to develop. The Web Map serves as a resource to make real property information and records for the entire county readily available to everyone in the community. In addition to providing property information, the Web Map service enables individuals to easily search properties by address, name or taxlot and create customized maps by activating a menu of overlays, such as: aerial photography, city or National Scenic Area boundaries, roads, soils, topographic features and zoning.



The Web Map is also furthering economic development in the region as it is proving to be a valuable tool to the development community. Particularly, realtors and professional land surveyors now have the ability to research zoning, site specific characteristics, records and filed land surveys in one place from their desk. Previously, all this information was only available to the public via specific requests.

The Web Map provides a wealth of information that was not previously available online. The service enhances the county's web presence and will continue to be updated and evolve over time to add more information and become more functional. The next steps envisioned to improve the Web Map are to hyperlink property survey and assessor data information to respective parcels. This would ultimately create a seamless link and one-stop-shop for almost all County Assessor, Planning and Survey information.

To access the Web Map, visit the Wasco County Homepage, <http://co.wasco.or.us/>, and click on the Wasco County Interactive Web Map icon in the center of the page.

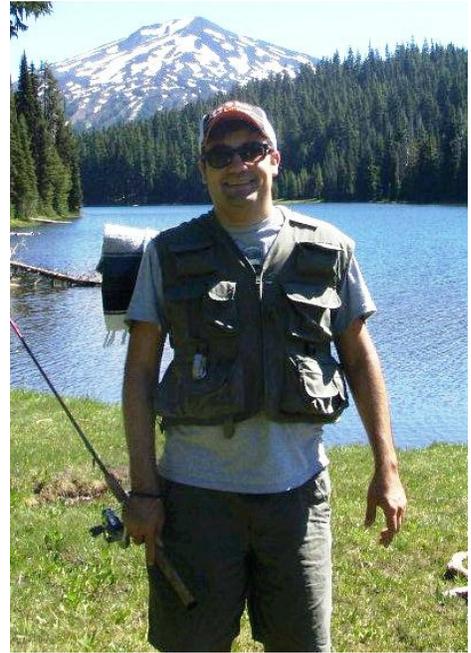
THANKS TO OUR 2012 STAFF & RECENT STAFFING CHANGES

During 2012 the planning department experienced some staffing changes and as a result was short-staffed a 1/3 of its Full Time Employees for 20% of the year. This situation was a bit tough because we lost these stellar staff members during the busiest time of the year. Because of personal and family obligations, they've moved on to new pastures, and we will miss them.

However, we are thankful to our remaining staff for all the hard work they put into keeping the department running smoothly over that time. Dawn, Brenda and Joey are dedicated and talented employees who continue to be the glue that helps hold our department together and provide our community an excellent planning resource.

In November the staffing changes included: promoting the existing Associate Planner to the Senior Planner position, hiring a new Associate Planner and backfilling the Code Compliance Officer position. Joey Shearer was promoted to Senior Planner, Michael Weidmann was hired as the new Associate Planner and Kate Foster was hired as the new Code Compliance Officer.

Mike joined the planning department after graduating from Portland State University with a Masters Degree in Urban and Regional Planning. Mike is passionate about promoting land use planning that will protect natural landscapes and support Oregon's farm and forest industries.



Michael Weidmann,
Associate Planner

Mike was drawn to Wasco County because of its unique geography, abundant outdoor amenities, and the complex land use planning environment spanning both Wasco County and the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. In addition to assisting customers at the front counter, Mike is reviewing land use applications, updating the Planning Department's website, and publishing the Connections Newsletter. Outside of the office you will find Mike in the outdoors fishing, hiking, camping, and snowboarding.



Kate Foster,
Code Compliance Officer

Kate was previously living on the west side of the Cascades in Albany, OR. She has a depth of planning experience from Wenatchee County, Washington and Linn County, Oregon, which has been serving Wasco County well. In addition to being drawn to the sunny part of the Gorge, Kate brings fairness, compassion, and enthusiasm to the Code Compliance Officer position here at Wasco County. One of her primary goals is to make our community better by working through the compliance process together with people, rather than on an opposing side. Kate is good at creating solutions that work for each case.

Outside of work, Kate and her husband, Camron, enjoy traveling Oregon exploring new towns and events. They love trips to the coast, attending festivals and fairs, and hiking. They have two kittens, one of which is leash trained for when they travel (as much as a cat can be leash trained). Last year, when Kate, Camron, and his parents went to the Oregon Gardens, they brought the kitten on a leash and he did great around all of the adults and kids. He had a tremendous time chasing butterflies and other bugs. Kate believes that the best memories come from time spent with family and friends and she looks forward to making more happy memories here as a

member of the community.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

The Wasco County Planning Commission meets the first Tuesday of each Month at the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center.

Please visit the [Planning Department website](#) for further details.

GOT A TOUGH QUESTION? ASK US!

If you have a question about anything in this newsletter, or if you have a general question about zoning, developing your property, floodplains or any other planning-related question, please let us help. You can send your questions to wcplanning@co.wasco.or.us. We will research your question and help you find the answer.

Please pass along this newsletter to anyone who may be interested in planning, land use and development in unincorporated portions of Wasco County. Archived editions of the newsletter will be posted to the Planning Department website. To subscribe to the newsletter, please click the "Join Our Mailing List!" button in the sidebar running down the left side of the newsletter.

Sincerely,

The Wasco County Planning Department

[Forward email](#)



Try it FREE today.

This email was sent to wcplanning@co.wasco.or.us by michaelw@co.wasco.or.us | [Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

Wasco County Planning Department | 2705 East 2nd Street | The Dalles | OR | 97058