



**Curry County
Board of Commissioners**

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County Enacts Amnesty Program

It comes down to dollars and safety. The county is serious about unpermitted structures, getting them on the tax rolls, and ensuring they meet state code.

Last week the County Board of Commissioners approved an Amnesty Program to encourage people to voluntarily come to the county to obtain the necessary planning and building permits before the county imposes penalties. People that developed without permits must come in and obtain the proper permits and still need to meet codes, but will not be assessed a penalty from the Community Development Department, which oversees permitting. The county is offering amnesty until April 1, 2020. After that date, when unpermitted development is discovered, owners could face strict penalties.

“We’ve seen people not be able to sell their homes, or secure mortgages, because their homes were not built to code. We’ve seen seven figure homes not appear on the tax rolls because people didn’t get permits. It’s time to make sure everybody is playing by the same rules, homes are built to code, and everyone is paying their fair share of taxes”, explained Commissioner Christopher Paasch, the commissioner that proposed the program.

When a permit is issued, the Assessor’s Office uses the data to assess improvements on the property. In a presentation to the Curry County Board of Commissioners in the spring of 2019, County Assessor, Jim Kolen, reported on the taxes foregone by unpermitted development. He estimated the total assessed value collected for non-permitted new construction during the last five years was \$14.5 million.

According to the Community Development Director, Julie Schmelzer, “The Amnesty Program is not available to those who have already been issued warnings or citations, rather it applies to those the county has not contacted yet. After April 1, 2020 the county will aggressively seek compliance to try and ensure safe housing and that everyone pays their fair share of taxes. We really don’t have a choice, and it is only fair to those that do pay taxes.”

Schmelzer added, “The county adopted an Emergency Housing Declaration in August that seeks to not just ensure housing for all, but *safe* housing for all. The safety of our residents and visitors, and the enjoyment of and quality of life associated with the use of property by residents and visitors, is a top priority for this Board of Commissioners. This program would benefit the community by assuring safe structures and diminishing fire and other risks to our community”.

If you occupy structures that have been built without permits, contact the Building Safety Department at (541) 247-3227.

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