



**Curry County
Board of Commissioners**

*Julie A. Schmelzer
Director of Operations*

94235 Moore Street/Suite #122
Gold Beach, OR 97444
www.co.curry.or.us
schmelzerj@co.curry.or.us

PRESS RELEASE

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“You’re not going to raise my taxes”

“You’re not going to raise my taxes” is a statement made by many in Curry County and it is heard often. Since the loss of timber revenues from the federal government years ago, Curry County has struggled to find ways to meet the needs of its citizens without raising property taxes. Many in the County are middle aged or older and continue to voice their concerns as they live on tight budgets. County Commissioner, Christopher Paasch, wants to challenge residents, “what can we do to continue to pay the bills, protect the citizens, and keep up with the ever changing costs to do business without raising property taxes?”

Paasch wants the citizens to better understand where their taxes go, who is getting funded, and who is not. “I believe there’s a better way of doing business, and I believe it can result in better services and cost savings. It will require some consolidating, and people to move beyond their comfort zone, but I’m challenging them to think of the big picture and make sure there’s enough funding for everyone”.

Paasch, who serves as the Chair of the Board of County Commissioners, points out this year about \$27,737,117 was collected in property taxes, penalties and fees. It was distributed as follows:

- Schools got \$15,238,685.27 or about 55% for the 6 school special districts
- Libraries got \$1,546,328.48 from the taxes collected to divide between the 5 library districts
- Fire Districts only got \$935,720.00 to protect the entire County from fire
- Curry County General Fund got \$1,898,970 to run County services
- Cities received about \$4,234,012 of your tax dollars
- Ports about \$804,708

There are ten other special districts and a bond in the County that draw local tax dollars as well. Paasch researched the history of special districts in America and reports when districts were formed, some several decades ago, their intent was for the good of the community they serve;

however, it is his belief some of them need to be looked at to best spend local tax dollars. "One thing we all need to understand is these districts get about a 3% increase every year--as mandated by state law our taxes go up about 3% per year. By compounding that rate that computes to doubling the amount the districts receive about every 20 years. Please understand, I am not advocating to dissolve any special district, but to look to consolidate some, and look at the amount of tax dollars given to each one to re-assess how much each truly needs to operate".

He adds, "of course our schools are imperative to the future of our kids, but why in a County of only about 23,000 people, with the average age over fifty, do we need six special districts for the schools and three superintendents? On that topic, the SWOCC Campus in Brookings has been reduced to almost all video schooling for the past two years and reduced their staff to a skeleton crew. Most of the tax dollars they collect from Curry County (\$2,220,960.38) are admittedly going to fund the campus in Coos-Bay and other projects. I propose looking to have three school districts in the County: one North, one Central, and one South, with one Superintendent for the entire County. I am also proposing to reduce the taxing district to the SWOCC Campus by one half, or, look to manage the campus and open it to private and corporate funding as a full-fledged vocational school with companies supporting the working class jobs we need here to support local interests".

Since taking office Paasch has not been shy about his intent to make the public aware of where their taxes are going. "Everyone thinks they are giving so much to the County, but what they don't realize is the County gets very little. If less went to what I perceive as 'fat' districts, perhaps people would be more willing to pay more to fund law enforcement and other necessary government services." Paasch says after looking into the 2019-20 SWOCC budget he could only identify about \$880,000 stayed local. He further alleges about 60% of the tax dollars are going out of the County to improve SWOCC interests elsewhere.

He also has concerns over too many library districts, "our library districts are five in a County of 23,000 people. Again libraries are imperative to the learning and education to many as well as a meeting place for special learning. However, given the budget shortfalls some face I would propose we consolidate all the library districts into one and share their resources. More and more people are turning to other sources of information and a simple google search on any topic puts thousands of articles, videos and life's lessons on that topic at your fingertips. After looking at the annual budgets of the libraries I learned there are millions of dollars in cash reserves in their bank accounts. Imagine a library with millions in the bank but we can't provide necessary government services? It's easy when the amount the districts get far outweighs their budget. I think this is an area we need to look to consolidate and reassess their budget."

He adds not all districts are banking excess wealth and points out there are thirteen fire districts, some having solid cash reserves, and they protect the county for less than 1 million dollars in total.

Commissioner Paasch added “so, what do we see missing here? What is lacking is one of the very reasons property taxes were created in the beginning--to protect us by funding law enforcement--to hire a Sheriff and have a jail for the bad guys. Our Sheriff year-after-year struggles to hire qualified personnel, keep up with fast changing technology, properly train his staff, and house the criminals that threaten the very place he is sworn to protect--in a safe jail. While we continually fund so many special districts there has never been a law enforcement district created in Curry County. Maybe that needs to change. A law enforcement district would allow the Sheriff a portion of the taxes collected so that he can plan his budget for the upcoming year and find the ways to properly protect and serve the citizens of Curry County.”

“We The People created these special districts by a vote of the people. To change these districts it will also take a vote of the people. I am certainly not asking to abandon any district in the County. All I am asking is to look at consolidating them and reassessing their budgets to make sure our tax dollars are well spent. Personally, I would rather sleep well at night knowing the Sheriff has the means to protect us and the funds to get it done. We all know some of the crimes we see happening around the country will never happen in Curry County, until they do”.

Paasch said he plans on asking voters this fall if they will allow some of the districts in the County to be looked at for consolidation and another to be created to permanently fund the Sheriff’s Department.

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Commissioner Christopher Paasch can be reached at paaschc@co.curry.or.us, or, (541) 247-3213