

**COUNTY OF WALLA WALLA
STATE OF WASHINGTON
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

**INFORMATIONAL HANDOUT
OFFICE OF WALLA WALLA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

There are no written outlines for the duties of a county commissioner in the State Constitution or the Revised Code of Washington. The first information provided below was developed by Walla Walla County and is based upon an informational booklet compiled by the Washington State Association of Counties.

Walla Walla County Commissioners

The basic form of county government is the Commissioner form. In 33 of Washington's 39 counties, county legislative and executive authorities are combined in boards of county commissioners also known as the county legislative authority. These elected officials are empowered to set county policy, adopt and implement laws and, except for the responsibilities of the other separately elected officials, carry out the day-to-day operations of the county.

County legislative authorities have three members elected to four-year terms. The county is divided into three districts with roughly equal populations and, at the time of election, each commissioner must live in the district he or she wishes to represent. In the primary election, only by voters of those open districts are allowed to vote; however, in the general election, all voters in a county vote for each county commissioner position on the ballot. County commissioners are elected on a partisan basis.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

As the county legislative authority, the Board of County Commissioners is responsible for adopting, amending or repealing all county ordinances, which are essentially laws of the county.

The county legislative authority fixes and adopts the county's annual budget, imposing the taxes and setting the fees to fund that budget. The amount each office and department may spend during the calendar year is established as part of the budgeting process. Amendments to the adopted budget are considered by the county commissioners during the year, pursuant to statute and sole authority. In addition, they make decisions on a wide variety of other subjects affecting the general health, safety, and welfare of county residents.

EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY

County commissioners operate all departments of the county, except those managed by other elected officials. Their responsibilities include:

- County roads and bridges
- Community mental health, substance abuse and developmental disabilities programs
- Juvenile detention facilities
- E-911 and emergency services
- Environmental protection
- Land use planning and zoning
- Building permits and inspections
- Cooperative extension
- County fair
- Public health
- County jail (Corrections)

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OTHER:

Current Walla Walla County Commissioners are:

- James K. Johnson (Commissioner Johnson represents District 1. He is serving his second full term in office; his term expires December 31, 2020.) Commissioner Johnson was appointed to office on May 1, 2012 to complete the term of former commissioner Gregg Loney, and was subsequently elected to the office and then re-elected.
- Todd L. Kimball (Commissioner Kimball represents District 2. He is serving his first term in office; his term expires December 31, 2020.)
- James L. Duncan (Commissioner Duncan is the 2017 Chair of the Board and represents District 3. He is serving his first term in office, and his term expires December 31, 2018.)

The Board of County Commissioners meets weekly, with session action agenda items generally planned for Mondays and workshops scheduled on Tuesdays. Agendas are usually finalized on Thursdays and commissioners' packets with all backup materials are furnished to each commissioner for review on Thursdays. Agendas and backup materials are available on the county website by noon on Fridays for public review.

Each county commissioner has many assigned state and local board and committee responsibilities, with associated meeting attendance. Generally county commissioners average approximately five daytime meetings a week (not counting weekly sessions), and at least two nighttime meetings a week, with meetings held throughout various areas of the county as well as in the Tri-Cities, Olympia, and other locations.

In addition, each county commissioner is assigned to serve as Board liaison for the various county offices and departments, and interacts with elected officials and department heads on various issues. Each month the commissioners meet with all county elected officials and department heads as a group.

Walla Walla County commissioners must be, and are, easily directly accessible basically 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by many means: In their offices; during commissioners' meetings; approaching them informally in public settings; calling them at the commissioners' office or on their personal cell phones; emailing them; or writing.

County commissioners have, almost without exception, the sole authority to encumber county assets and resources; execute contracts; manage county property; declare emergencies; set county fees and policies; employ and appoint county department heads; set salaries for county elected officials; and make appointments to boards as provided by statute, in addition to many, many other responsibilities. The statutory powers are further listed in a separate document.

County commissioners' salaries were frozen at the 2012 level of \$68,851 through 2016, pursuant to Walla Walla County Resolutions 12 133 and 13 138. For 2017 and pursuant to County Resolution 14 108, commissioners' salaries were set at \$76,881, commensurate with the majority of other County elected officials.

Persons interested in running for the position of county commissioner should contact the Elections Department of the County Auditor's office at 509/524-2530, or go to the county's website www.co.walla-walla.wa.us and select "Auditor", and then "Elections", for more information on filing for office, etc.

The following is an "extract of an extract" from the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), Chapter 36.32, at the following link: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=36.32> (Accompanying this handout there is also an extract of statutory duties of a county commissioner, copied from the governing RCW Chapter.)

Powers of legislative authorities.

The legislative authorities of the several counties shall:

(1) Provide for the erection and repairing of court houses, jails, and other necessary public buildings for the use of the county;

(2) Lay out, discontinue, or alter county roads and highways within their respective counties, and do all other necessary acts relating thereto according to law, except within cities and towns which have jurisdiction over the roads within their limits;

(3) License and fix the rates of ferriage; grant grocery and other licenses authorized by law to be by them granted at fees set by the legislative authorities which shall not exceed the costs of administration and operation of such licensed activities;

(4) Fix the amount of county taxes to be assessed according to the provisions of law, and cause the same to be collected as prescribed by law;

(5) Allow all accounts legally chargeable against the county not otherwise provided for, and audit the accounts of all officers having the care, management, collection, or disbursement of any money belonging to the county or appropriated to its benefit;

(6) Have the care of the county property and the management of the county funds and business and in the name of the county prosecute and defend all actions for and against the county, and such other powers as are or may be conferred by law;

(7) Make and enforce, by appropriate resolutions or ordinances, all such police and sanitary regulations as are not in conflict with state law, and within the unincorporated area of the county may adopt by reference Washington state statutes and recognized codes and/or compilations printed in book form relating to the construction of buildings, the installation of plumbing, the installation of electric wiring, health, or other subjects, and may adopt such codes and/or compilations or portions thereof, together with amendments thereto, or additions thereto:

(8) Have power to compound and release in whole or in part any debt due to the county when in their opinion the interest of their county will not be prejudiced thereby, except in cases where they or any of them are personally interested;

(9) Have power to administer oaths or affirmations necessary in the discharge of their duties and commit for contempt any witness refusing to testify before them with the same power as district judges;

(10) Have power to declare by ordinance what shall be deemed a nuisance within the county, including but not limited to "litter" and "potentially dangerous litter" as defined in RCW [70.93.030](#); to prevent, remove, and abate a nuisance at the expense of the parties creating, causing, or committing the nuisance; and to levy a special assessment on the land or premises on which the nuisance is situated to defray the cost, or to reimburse the county for the cost of abating it. This assessment shall constitute a lien against the property which shall be of equal rank with state, county, and municipal taxes.

Notes/duties of a county commissioner:

Air pollution control

advisory council, commissioner as member: RCW [70.94.240](#).

district, commissioner as member: RCW [70.94.100](#).

Board of law library trustees, commissioner as member: RCW [27.24.024](#).

Canvassing board, commissioner as member: RCW [39.40.030](#).

Cemeteries and funeral facilities, acquisition and operation of: Chapter [68.52](#) RCW.

Certified transcripts of commissioner meetings as evidence: RCW [5.44.070](#).

Continuity of government act, effect as to: RCW [42.14.040](#), [42.14.070](#).

County board of equalization, commissioners as: Chapter [84.48](#) RCW.

County board of health, commissioners as members of: RCW [70.05.030](#).

County canvassing board, commissioner as member: RCW [29A.60.160](#).

County health boards, commissioners as, duties: Chapter [70.05](#) RCW.

District court districting committee, commissioner as member of: RCW [3.38.010](#).

Duties relating to

air pollution control districts: Chapter [70.94](#) RCW.

assessor's plats: RCW [58.18.010](#).

bailiffs of the superior court: RCW [2.32.360](#).

basic juvenile court act: Chapter [13.04](#) RCW.

billiard table, pigeon-hole table: RCW [67.14.050](#).

bonds of public officers: Chapter [42.08](#) RCW.

bowling alleys: RCW [67.14.050](#).

cemetery districts: Chapter [68.52](#) RCW.

cities and towns

advancement of classification: Chapter [35.06](#) RCW.

agreements on planning, establishing, construction, etc., of streets: Chapter [35.77](#) RCW.

annexation of unincorporated areas: Chapter [35.13](#) RCW.

county aid on street construction, etc.: RCW [47.24.050](#).

disincorporation of: Chapter [35.07](#) RCW.

erection of drawbridges in: Chapter [35.74](#) RCW.

general indebtedness bonds, county tax levy to pay: RCW [35.37.120](#).

incorporation proceedings: Chapter [35.02](#) RCW.

L.I.D. assessments of county property: RCW [35.44.140](#), [35.49.070](#).

civil service for sheriff's office: Chapter [41.14](#) RCW.

combined city-county health department: Chapter [70.08](#) RCW.

county airport districts: Chapter [14.08](#) RCW.

county and city tuberculosis hospitals: Chapter [70.30](#) RCW.

county flood control: Chapter [86.12](#) RCW.

county road fund, illegal use of: RCW [47.08.100](#).

penalty: RCW [47.08.110](#).

county road projects if let to department of transportation where matching funds: RCW [47.08.080](#).

county superintendent of schools: Chapter [28A.310](#) RCW.

county teachers' institute: Chapter [28A.310](#) RCW.

court commissioner's salary: RCW [2.24.030](#).

dancing, license to conduct: Chapter [67.12](#) RCW.

detention facilities for juveniles: Chapter [13.16](#) RCW.

devices to protect fish in lakes: RCW [90.24.050](#).

diking and drainage intercounty districts: Chapter [85.24](#) RCW.

diking districts: Chapter [85.05](#) RCW.

reorganization of (1917 act): Chapter [85.20](#) RCW.

reorganization of (1933 act): Chapter [85.22](#) RCW.
diking, drainage and sewerage improvement districts: Chapter [85.08](#) RCW.
federal aid to: Chapter [85.12](#) RCW.
maintenance costs and levies: Chapter [85.16](#) RCW.
diking, drainage district benefits to roads, how paid: RCW [85.07.040](#), [85.07.050](#).
diseased animals: RCW [16.36.070](#).
district court
clerks, assistants: Chapter [3.54](#) RCW.
facilities: RCW [3.58.050](#).
legislative authority: RCW [3.42.040](#).
district courts and other courts of limited jurisdiction: Chapters [3.30](#), [3.34](#), [3.38](#), [3.42](#), [3.46](#), [3.50](#), [3.54](#), [3.58](#), [3.62](#), [3.66](#), [3.70](#), [3.74](#) RCW.
drainage districts: Chapter [85.06](#) RCW.
reorganization of (1917 act): Chapter [85.20](#) RCW.
reorganization of (1933 act): Chapter [85.22](#) RCW.
drawbridges, municipal: RCW [35.74.020](#), [35.74.030](#).
elections
creating new precincts: RCW [29A.16.040](#), [29A.16.050](#).
voting systems: Chapter [29A.12](#) RCW.
electric franchises and rights-of-way: RCW [80.32.010](#).
eminent domain by
counties: Chapter [8.08](#) RCW.
county, wharves for: RCW [88.24.070](#).
federal property, purchase of: Chapter [39.32](#) RCW.
federal tax lien index: RCW [60.68.045](#).
ferry system tariffs and charges, review committee: RCW [47.60.310](#).
fire protection district commissioner vacancy: RCW [52.14.050](#).
fire protection districts: Chapters [52.04](#), [52.08](#), [52.12](#), [52.16](#) RCW.
flood control by counties jointly: Chapter [86.13](#) RCW.
flood control districts (1937 act): Chapter [86.09](#) RCW.
flood control zone districts: Chapter [86.15](#) RCW.
funding indebtedness of counties: Chapter [39.52](#) RCW.
game, use of state lands for game purposes: RCW [77.12.360](#) through [77.12.390](#).
health districts: Chapter [70.46](#) RCW.
hospital districts: Chapter [70.44](#) RCW.
housing authority act: Chapter [35.82](#) RCW.
housing projects, cooperation: Chapter [35.83](#) RCW.
human remains: Chapter [68.50](#) RCW.
industrial development districts: Chapter [53.25](#) RCW.
intercounty rural library districts: Chapter [27.12](#) RCW.
intercounty weed districts: Chapter [17.06](#) RCW.
internal revenue taxes, lien for: RCW [60.68.045](#).
irrigation and rehabilitation district rules and regulations: RCW [87.84.090](#).
irrigation districts
director divisions: Chapter [87.04](#) RCW.
dissolution of districts with bonds: Chapter [87.53](#) RCW.
generally: Chapter [87.03](#) RCW.
joint control of: Chapter [87.80](#) RCW.
merger with drainage, joint drainage or consolidated drainage improvement district: RCW [87.03.720](#)
through [87.03.745](#).
joint aid river and harbor improvements: RCW [88.32.230](#) through [88.32.235](#).
legal aid: Chapter [2.50](#) RCW.
lien foreclosure: Chapter [84.64](#) RCW.
liquor
retail license: RCW [67.14.040](#).
sale or other disposition of: RCW [67.14.020](#).
wholesale license: RCW [67.14.050](#).
medical care by state, in county hospitals: Chapter [74.09](#) RCW.
metropolitan municipal corporations: Chapter [35.58](#) RCW.
mineral and petroleum leases on county lands: Chapter [78.16](#) RCW.

mines, abandoned mining shafts and excavations: Chapter [78.12](#) RCW.
mosquito control districts: Chapter [17.28](#) RCW.
motor vehicle maximum speed limits outside cities and towns: RCW [46.61.400](#) through [46.61.425](#).
parks, bathing beaches, public camps, acquisition and operation of: Chapter [67.20](#) RCW.
pest districts: Chapter [17.12](#) RCW.
planning commission: Chapter [35.63](#) RCW.
port districts
 annexation of land to: Chapter [53.04](#) RCW.
 commissioner elections: Chapter [53.12](#) RCW.
 consolidation of: Chapter [53.46](#) RCW.
 formation of: Chapter [53.04](#) RCW.
public cemetery and morgue: RCW [68.52.010](#), [68.52.020](#).
public health pooling fund: RCW [70.12.030](#).
public lands
 rights-of-way over for roads, county wharves: RCW [79.36.440](#).
 tidelands and shorelands, petition for replat: RCW [79.125.080](#).
public utility districts: Chapters [54.08](#), [54.40](#) RCW.
 privilege tax: Chapter [54.28](#) RCW.
public waterway districts: Chapter [91.08](#) RCW.
railroad grade crossings: Chapter [81.53](#) RCW.
reclamation districts of one million acres: Chapter [89.30](#) RCW.
reforestation: Chapter [79.22](#) RCW.
 county exchange of land to block up holdings: RCW [79.17.020](#) and [79.17.060](#).
right to back and hold waters over county roads: RCW [90.28.010](#), [90.28.020](#).
river and harbor improvement districts: Chapter [88.32](#) RCW.
river and harbor improvements by counties jointly: RCW [88.32.180](#) through [88.32.220](#).
roads, closure of: Chapter [47.48](#) RCW.
roads and bridges, limited access facilities: Chapter [47.52](#) RCW.
rural county library districts: Chapter [27.12](#) RCW.
rural pool halls, billiard halls and bowling alleys, licensing of: Chapter [67.12](#) RCW.
school district organization: Chapter [28A.315](#) RCW.
school districts
 penalties relating to: Chapter [28A.635](#) RCW.
 second class, expenditures: Chapter [28A.330](#) RCW.
 validation of indebtedness: Chapter [28A.535](#) RCW.
school funds: Chapter [28A.545](#) RCW.
section and corner lines, establishment of: Chapter [58.04](#) RCW.
special districts in counties with a population of two hundred ten thousand or more, disincorporation of:
Chapter [57.90](#) RCW.
state highways, acquisition of county lands for: RCW [47.12.040](#).
stock restricted areas: Chapter [16.24](#) RCW.
street railways: Chapter [81.64](#) RCW.
superior court special sessions: RCW [2.08.140](#), [2.08.150](#).
taxes, excise tax on real estate sales: Chapter [82.45](#) RCW.
property
 collection of: Chapter [84.56](#) RCW.
 levy of: Chapter [84.52](#) RCW.
 lien foreclosure: Chapter [84.64](#) RCW.
 listing of: Chapter [84.40](#) RCW.
 revaluation: Chapter [84.41](#) RCW.
temporary gates across highways: RCW [16.60.080](#).
temporary quarters for court: RCW [2.28.141](#).
towns, uncertain boundaries: RCW [35.27.040](#) through [35.27.060](#).
traffic control devices: Chapter [47.36](#) RCW.
traffic schools: Chapter [46.83](#) RCW.
underground storage of natural gas, lease of county lands for: RCW [80.40.070](#).
United States reclamation areas, contracts to bring county lands into: RCW [89.12.110](#).
veterans, indigent, deceased, burial of: RCW [73.08.070](#).
veterans' meeting places, rent by county: RCW [73.04.080](#).
veterans' relief: Chapter [73.08](#) RCW.

vouchers on public funds: Chapter [42.24](#) RCW.
water-sewer districts
annexation of property to: Chapter [57.24](#) RCW.
board of commissioners, vacancies: RCW [57.12.020](#).
consolidation of: Chapter [57.32](#) RCW.
generally: Title [57](#) RCW.
transfer of part: RCW [57.32.160](#).
withdrawal of territory from: Chapter [57.28](#) RCW.
weed district tax on county lands: RCW [17.04.180](#).
weed districts: Chapter [17.04](#) RCW.
wharves, authorizing of and prescribing rates: RCW [88.24.020](#).

Flood control

district (1937 act) board, commissioner to act for absent member: RCW [86.09.292](#).
zone districts, commissioners as ex officio supervisors: RCW [86.15.050](#).

Health districts: Chapter [70.46](#) RCW.

Metropolitan sewer advisory committee, commissioner as member: RCW [35.58.210](#).

Metropolitan water advisory committee, commissioner as member: RCW [35.58.230](#).

Property tax advisor: RCW [84.48.140](#).

Public assistance as county function: RCW [74.04.040](#).

Rangers, commissioners as ex officio: RCW [76.04.045](#).

Reclamation district commission, commissioner as member of: RCW [89.30.055](#).

Redistricting by local governments and municipal corporations -- Census information for -- Plan, prepared when, criteria for, hearing on, request for review of, certification, remand -- Sanctions when review request frivolous: RCW [29A.76.010](#).

Revenue, department of, to advise commissioners: RCW [84.08.020](#).

Review board, commissioner as member of: RCW [35.13.171](#).

Solid waste collection districts: Chapter [36.58A](#) RCW.

Traffic safety commission, member of association of county commissioners appointed to: RCW [43.59.030](#).

United States townsite law, dedication of streets, etc., under commissioners may alienate: RCW [58.28.440](#).