

Looking Forward, 2011 State of the County Address Faye Stewart

Thank you all for coming out today. As you've heard, we continue to make success happen – each day.

And it's no secret we have significant budgetary challenges ahead of us. With the continued uncertainty of Secure Rural Schools Funding and certain cuts to the State budget, we are already strategizing on ways Lane County can address shortfalls. It will be difficult. Our organization will undergo changes as we make challenging decisions during this year's budget adoption process. The communities we serve will be affected.

We'll be talking about this a lot in the coming year. However, it's not what I want to focus on just yet. Today, I want to share two immediate goals for our organization moving forward.

Goal One: Get in Shape

While I recognize this sounds like a personal health goal – and believe me it is – I've also done enough thinking about this to know that a healthy heart, an active mind, and strong bones and muscles can also be applied to an organization.

Here's what this means for Lane County.

It begins with asking how we're doing. We'll start with the 2011 Lane County Community Survey going out to 3,000 local residents in the coming weeks. We have to know what Lane County residents think of their County government services. We conducted this survey two years ago and this year's survey gives us the opportunity to compare results. Are we improving? Are there services or areas we need to take a closer look at? As we learn, we'll share with you our progress.

Getting in shape also means working to make sure our leadership is strong. We are very fortunate to have Liane Richardson at the helm this year as interim County Administrator. Her focus, dedication and commitment to this organization will serve us well. We're pleased she's stepped into this challenging job and are confident in her abilities.

Moving forward, we'll make a decision for a permanent County Administrator. Choosing a permanent County Administrator is no small task. This is an incredibly important position, and key to helping create a vision and road map for Lane County.

We will also tap an interim Sheriff to replace Sheriff Russ Burger. We're very proud and honored that Sheriff Burger has been nominated and selected by President Obama to be the next United States Marshal for the District of Oregon. We know exactly why he

would be chosen for this appointment. Russ exemplifies what public service and dedication are all about. His commitment to providing safety and to the well being of Lane County residents is unshakable. We have been truly fortunate to have his leadership.

Today, we also usher in new Board leadership. I want to congratulate and welcome new Commissioners Sid Leiken and Jay Bozievich to the Board. As each of you become familiar with your new role, I want to combine some advice as well as make a request. Counties are unique. We provide services to city residents and to residents of unincorporated areas alike. And while you were elected by a defined set of voters, please keep in mind that you are in service to all the residents of Lane County. If this Board is to function the way I'd like it to function, consideration of what is in the best interest to the whole will be a guiding principle.

There's a lot to learn and I think you'll find there's no better place to serve.

I also want to thank outgoing Commissioners Bill Dwyer and Bill Fleenor. Though we didn't always agree, we've all worked in the best interest of our citizens. Thank you both for your commitment to Lane County and its residents.

Knowing we have both new and familiar leadership steering Lane County, I am confident in our strength and in the dynamic outcomes that can be achieved when combining new thoughts with seasoned knowledge.

Having strong leadership is more than just finding the right folks to lead. It's about teamwork. We know we have challenges. The better we work as a team, the easier the coming months will be.

Which brings me to **Goal Two: Building Partnerships**

Henry Ford once said "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."

We cannot and will not go it alone.

This year, I plan to lead a process to strengthen our existing relationships while building new partnerships. It will be a slow build, and one that I intend to ensure remains stable through the good times and the bad times.

This will mean an even greater level of participation by our Board. We've stepped up our outreach each year and we're going to continue. I plan to engage our Board in

serving at the committee level so that we're involved in multiple ways on the ideas and issues our organization and communities face.

Another important piece is getting out of the Board room more often and reaching out to our cities. They are among our best allies in service and we need to improve these relationships so that we're working together for the betterment of all Lane County residents.

We are all undergoing budget challenges – including local schools and cities – and it's important that we support one another.

We may not always have the same interests. Yet I'm hopeful we can rally together in support of a common interest: service to our community members.

I look to our Oregon Delegation as an example of the partnership I'm talking about. Congressmen Peter DeFazio and Greg Walden; and Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley have been tireless ambassadors for Lane County. They may have different political views or competing interests but when they come together on behalf of Lane County, they're a powerful force.

And they're working hard for the renewal of critical Federal Secure Rural Schools funding. This is a major financial contributor to our budget and without this funding; we will make service reductions and cuts to many important services.

Our chances for renewal for this fiscal year budget are slim. However, I know that with the support and collaboration of many, our voice is stronger. And I know that working together with our local partners is critical to our success in any endeavor.

To Our Community Members

We know you are hurting. We hear you.

The decisions we make in our upcoming budget will likely reduce or even eliminate needed services. These coming decisions will be among my most challenging since entering office. It weighs on me as a Commissioner, and as a member of this community. I'm wrestling with the knowledge that we have to make cuts at a time when more people are finding themselves in need.

It doesn't seem fair. And it isn't.

However, we will continue to explore what we're able to do. The challenge is making the most of what we have and continuing to provide the best service.

To County Employees

You are at the heart of this organization. You have my respect.

I've worked hard to understand the various roles of Lane County and the functions that are carried out by our employees. After years of dwindling revenues and continued impacts to our organization, I've seen you work even harder. You've haven't given up. You've become more creative, you've dug in and all I can ask is that you continue your resolve for service.

In Conclusion

The County, in time, will likely not look the same as it does today. We have to create a County that's more flexible to change as change appears to be our only constant.

On behalf of your County leaders, I promise we will make the best decisions possible with the information available. We will continue to strive to provide the best service we can while remaining relevant to the communities we serve.

I want to thank you for coming out, and for your support and interest in Lane County. I hope that as the year continues, you remain interested, involved and invested in how your County works.