

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF SPOKANE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

IN THE MATTER OF SETTING THE PUBLIC)
OFFICE HOURS OF THE SPOKANE COUNTY)
ASSESSOR, SPOKANE COUNTY)
TREASURER, AND SPOKANE COUNTY)
AUDITOR FROM MARCH 19, 2020 UNTIL)
MAY 1, 2020)

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, pursuant to the provisions of RCW 36.32.120(6), the Board of County Commissioners of Spokane County, Washington, (the “Board”) has the care of county property and the management of county funds and business; and

WHEREAS, the Governor of the State of Washington on February 29, 2020, declared a State of Emergency in all counties of Washington due to the public health emergency caused by COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the Governor of the State of Washington on March 13, 2020, issued an order closing all public and private school in Washington State for six weeks starting Tuesday, March 17, 2020, and lasting through April 4, 2020, due to the public health emergency caused by COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the provisions RCW 36.16.100, all county offices shall be kept open for the transaction of business during such days and hours as the Board shall by resolution prescribe; and

WHEREAS, the severity of the situation demands that the Board take measures to protect the public and county employees from further transmission of COVID-19 in Spokane County, Washington; and

WHEREAS, the Board has received a request from the Spokane County Assessor, Spokane County Treasurer, and Spokane County Auditor, that the public office hours for their respective offices will be closed to the public’s walk-in business from March 19, 2020 until May 1, 2020; and

WHEREAS, in light of the foregoing, the Spokane County Auditor, Assessor, and Treasurer have requested to the Board of County Commissioners that their offices be closed to the general public for walk in business from March 19, 2020 until May 1, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the Spokane County Auditor, Assessor, and Treasurer have advised that during this period, the public may continue to access members of their office staffs by telephone and email; and the public may continue to access the websites maintained by these elected officials. See, attached press release.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED by the Board of County Commissioners of Spokane County, pursuant to the provisions of RCW 36.16.100 and at the request of the Spokane County Assessor, Spokane County Treasurer, and Spokane County Auditor, which is hereby acknowledged and accepted, that their respective offices will be closed to the general public for walk-in business from March 19, 2020 until May 1, 2020. However, during this period, the public may continue to contact their offices by telephone and email for any questions or assistance that is necessary.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Board of County Commissions of Spokane County that the provisions of this resolution shall not affect any other public office hours of any other Elected Official or any public office hours previously approved by the Board of County Commissioners. Provided, however, Gerry Gemmill, County CEO shall have the authority on a case by case basis to approve office hours for departments under direct authority and control of the Board of County Commissioners consistent with or different that those set forth herein.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 17th day of March, 2020.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF SPOKANE COUNTY, WASHINGTON



ATTEST:

ABSENT

AL FRENCH, Chair


JOSH KERNS, Vice-Chair


Ginna Vasquez, Clerk of the Board


MARY L. KONEY, Commissioner



MICHAEL BAUMGARTNER
THE TREASURER OF SPOKANE COUNTY
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For Immediate Release:

March 17th, 2020

Contact: Arthur Whitten (509) 435-3014 AWhitten@SpokaneCounty.org (Treasurer's Office)

Vicky Dalton (509) 477-2262 VDalton@SpokaneCounty.org (Auditor's Office)

Tom Konis (509) 477-5732 TKonis@SpokaneCounty.org (Assessor's Office)

The Offices of the Spokane County Treasurer, Auditor and Assessor move to virtual customer service to comply with Governor's COVID-19 State of Emergency Proclamation Concerning Public Gatherings; Treasurer, Auditor & Assessor to Hold Media Availability Wednesday March 18th 1:00 P.M. in front of Spokane County Courthouse

In response to Governor and Health Authority mandates limiting public crowd size, the Offices of the Spokane County Treasurer, Auditor, and Assessor will move their customer service operations to a virtual format effective Thursday March 19th and lasting until May 1st. Citizens can still receive services online, via email or regular mail, and by phone.

This means citizens wishing to access Treasury, Auditor or Assessor services who arrive on site at the Courthouse will not be served in person at the front counters. Citizens who have a complex issue that may require a face-to-face meeting with staff will be able to call or email to schedule an in-person meeting.

This virtual customer service decision affects only the Offices of the Treasurer, Auditor and Assessor and not other Spokane County Offices or departments. At the Courthouse, the Treasurer, Auditor and Assessor share a lobby entrance that can attract up to 500 people per day during the busy property tax season, far above Governor Inslee's State of Emergency Proclamation limiting crowd size to 50 person and above recent White House guidance of limiting public gatherings to a maximum of 10 people. Furthermore, increased foot traffic can quickly lead to lines forming in violation of recommended social distancing guidelines of six feet of separation.

"Our employees are committed to providing outstanding service to the public during these challenging times," said Auditor Vicky Dalton. "If somebody needs a marriage license or documents recorded they will still be able to do it and we will make sure to help walk them through it over the phone or by email."

Michael Baumgartner, the Spokane County Treasurer highlighted that citizens do not need to physically come to the courthouse to pay their taxes.

"Property taxes can readily be paid online or by mail," said Baumgartner. "For those wishing to come down to the Courthouse, we will continue to have a tax payment drop-box inside the Courthouse entrance. Those experiencing hardships making their property tax payments are encouraged to contact our office as soon as possible to discuss all available options."



MICHAEL BAUMGARTNER
THE TREASURER OF SPOKANE COUNTY
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“Our staff will still be here and working hard,” said Assessor Tom Konis. “If somebody needs help finding out if they qualify for tax payment assistance or have questions about their property assessments our staff will be available by phone and email.”

Each of Baumgartner, Dalton and Konis stressed that citizens with questions should not hesitate to call their respective offices:

Contact information for Treasurer, Auditor & Assessor Offices:

- Treasurer: (509) 477-4713 (Property Tax Collection, Excise Taxes)
- Auditor: (509) 477-2270 (Recording & Marriage Licenses)
- Auditor: (509) 477-2222 (Vehicle Licensing & Titling)
- Assessor (509) 477-3698 (Property Assessment, Senior & Disabled Exemptions)

The Treasurer, Auditor & Assessor will hold a media availability at 1:00 P.M. Wednesday March 18th in front of the Spokane County Courthouse to provide further details regarding the transition to virtual customer service.

By moving to a virtual format, we can do our best to follow the State of Emergency guidance and take sensible steps to keep both the public and our employees safe.

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