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the COUNTY VOICE

Utah Association of Counties

SUMMER 2010

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And much, much more!

Coming Soon

July 28-30, 2010

Recorders Summer Conference
Tooele

August 4-6, 2010

Clerk/Auditors Summer Confer-
ence
Provo

August 19, 2010

Surveyor's Summer Conference
Heber City

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Are Counties Getting Priced Out of the Passport Business?

Yolo County California Clerk-Recorder Freddie Oakley's announcement in June that his office would no longer act as a passport agent for the US Department of State didn't send shockwaves through the country.

But it did signal a growing concern among county clerks nationwide, and more specifically in Utah, that those acting as passport agents (primarily county clerk and post offices) are finding it more difficult to afford the service.

This month marked a major increase in passport fees from \$100--with the issuing agency keeping \$30 of that--to \$135 and the agency only keeping \$25. So, while the Feds now get a 57% bump, issuing agents (such as counties and post offices) will have to endure a 17% loss in revenue.

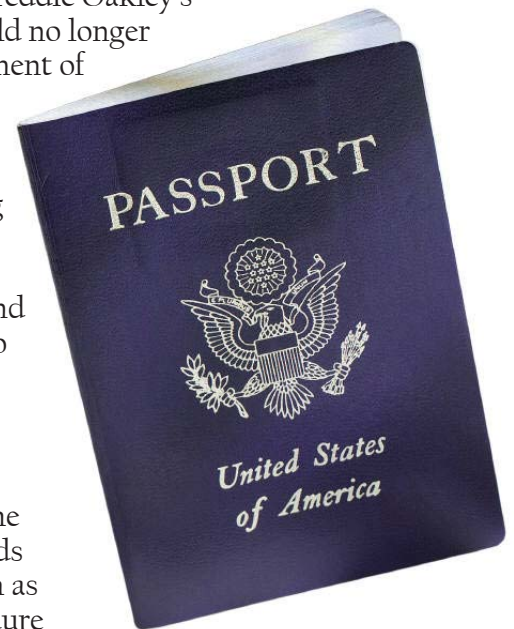
Does this make any sense at all?

Juab County Clerk/Auditor Pat Ingram doesn't think so and is feeling the pain.

"I am seriously considering discontinuing this service. The only reason I still do them is because everyone would have to go to Provo for (it)," said Ingram.

Ingram says the cost of postage and time processing the applications probably exceeds the \$25 her office gets in return.

July's increase marks the third time passport fees have increased in less than five years. But it's the first time issuing agencies have been given a reduced revenue in return.



see *PASSPORTS* page 3

Long Range Planning Committee on a Mission

The Long Range Planning Committee, organized by the UAC Board of Directors in 2009, has met on multiple occasions to discuss the overall strategy and direction of UAC.

To that end, the Committee has crafted and adopted three statements which will be

considered for ratification by the UAC Board of Directors in an upcoming meeting. UAC publishes this information, allowing for general members to make comments or ask questions. If you have feedback about these new statements, please contact Brent Gardner at (801) 265-1331.

2010-11 CALENDAR

Please mark your calendars for the following key UAC events in 2010-11. Should there be a change, we will notify you as soon as possible.

July 28-30, 2010
Recorders Summer Conference
Tooele

August 4-6, 2010
Clerk/Auditors Summer Conference
Provo

August 19, 2010
Surveyor's Summer Conference
Heber City

September 15-17, 2010
USACCC Fall Conference
Midway

November 10-12, 2010
UAC Annual Convention
St. George

February 4, 2011
County Official Day at the Legislature
State Capitol Complex

April 13-15, 2011
UAC Management Conference
Layton

May 18, 2011
WIR Annual Conference
Wenatchee, WA

Mission Statement

The mission of the Utah Association of Counties is to promote and facilitate excellence in county government.

Vision Statement

The Utah Association of Counties is a strong and effective voice advocating for county government. UAC provides education and training for elected officials, assists county officials in providing services to county citizens and promotes a greater public understanding of those services

Value Statement

The values of the Utah Association of Counties are to provide services to its members which will help them perform their duties and provide the greatest benefit to county citizens

Browns Welcome Bundle of Joy

UAC staffer Jill Brown and her husband Trent, welcomed their new baby into the world on Monday. Anessa weighed in at seven pounds, six ounces and both mother and baby are doing well.



Passports *continued from page 1*

Perhaps this latest round is simply an adjustment to the 2008 change in law creating the additional land-only passport (to Canada and Mexico) and requiring all border-crossing travelers to carry a passport.

Salt Lake County Clerk Sherrie Swensen said her office was swamped with passport processing problems when the change took affect. Since then, she reports that much of that has smoothed out as the Department of State has hired enough staff to meet the new demands.

Either way, most clerks are frustrated as they sense a need to continue to serve the public but are finding it increasingly difficult to do so.

“We provide a wonderful service to the public and it would only hurt them,” said Swensen. “The post offices that execute passports do so for limited hours and (in some cases) by appointment.”

Presently, only three counties in Utah do not service passport applications. Of the 26 that remain, nine are the only game in town, so to speak. So if a person needs a new passport in those counties they either go to the county clerk or must go to a different county altogether. Passport renewals can be done online or at an agency location.

A blanket loss of passport service through Utah’s counties is probably not a reality any time soon, but it would certainly impact a lot of

citizens who value the convenience and service offered in their local community.



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National Surveys Confirm, Counties Are Cutting Back

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Struggling with sharp declines in revenues, the nation’s counties are laying off police, sheriff and fire personnel along with layoffs and furloughs across other county departments to help address significant budget shortfalls as a result of a stubborn national recession, according to a new survey by the National Association of Counties (NACo).

The NACo survey is the fourth in a series of “County Economic Status” surveys since 2008 to collect information about the impact that the recession is having on county governments, budgets and services. The sample group for the latest survey consisted of 800 counties in all population ranges and all geographical regions of the country. Responses were received in late June from 104 counties in 33 states. The full survey results are provided below.

Counties reported that they are responding to the budget shortfalls with spending reductions in all aspects of their budgets. The leading areas of cuts were employee pay freezes (67 percent), capital investment delays (66 percent), hiring freezes (64 percent), purchase and repair delays (64 percent), layoffs (37 percent), and furloughs (23 percent). Many counties reported layoffs of hundreds of employees since 2008. Two counties reported having more than 1,000 fewer employees today than in 2008.

County service areas receiving the most furloughs, layoffs and cutbacks are administration (44 percent); sheriff, police and fire and rescue (37 percent); roads, highways and transportation (35 percent); jails and corrections (28 percent) and health (25 percent). This is despite 85 percent of counties reporting

that they have received, or expect to receive, funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment and Act (ARRA).

“Our survey shows conclusively that counties large and small are struggling to address budget shortfalls and to fund essential services and programs communities have come to expect,” said NACo Executive Director Larry E. Naake. “The fact that 37 percent of counties are laying off police, sheriff and fire personnel indicates the seriousness of the revenue crisis, since public safety personnel are usually the last to be laid off. Counties large and small are experiencing their worst budget and revenue crisis since the early 1990s.”

Sixty four percent of responding counties said that they anticipated a revenue shortfall at the beginning of their current fiscal year. The anticipated shortfalls ranged from less than \$100,000 to more than \$200 million. More than half of those counties (55 percent) said that their anticipated shortfall became worse since the beginning of the fiscal year.

The three leading revenue sources responsible for the shortfalls were sales tax receipts (59 percent), reductions in state aid or federal funding (57 percent) and property tax

receipts (45 percent).

“The challenge for counties during these tough times is to provide services to families, seniors and veterans who are relying more on county services and programs as the economy continues to struggle,” Naake said.

County governments are responsible for providing essential services important to communities, including maintaining roads and bridges, operating airports and other transit systems, delivering critical health care services, providing law enforcement, courtroom and jail services, funding schools, and numerous social services for seniors and families. Many counties are the first line of defense for emergency and pandemic preparedness and response.



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Executive Summary of Economic Status Survey

In mid June 2010 the National Association of Counties conducted a survey to look at the continuing impact of the economy on a sample of counties across the country. The sample group was made up of 800 counties in all population groups and all geographic regions of the country. This survey is the fourth in a series that NACo has conducted since 2008 to collect information about the impact that the recession is having on county

governments, their budgets and their service delivery. This survey reveals that the downturn continues to be widespread with counties of all sizes feeling the crunch from many directions. Counties report that they are using furloughs, layoffs and service curtailment to help reduce budgets that in many cases remain problematic because of continuing shortfalls. Follow up questions on the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act Funds show that some

counties are still waiting for revenue. Responses were received from 104 counties in 33 states. The survey reveals:

- » 36% of responding counties, at the beginning of the current fiscal year, did not anticipate a revenue shortfall.
- » 45% of the counties reported between \$100,000 and \$50 million in shortfalls at the beginning of their fiscal year. 26% report starting their fiscal years with between \$1 to 5 million shortfall and 1% percent reported a projected shortfall of \$200-250 million.
- » 56% of counties say that the shortfall increased after the start of their fiscal year.
- » 48% of counties with additional shortfalls report that these additional shortfalls were from a low of \$250,000 to a high of \$5 million.

Revenues creating shortfalls include:

- Sales taxes 59%
- Reductions in state or federal funding 57%
- Property taxes 45%

Counties are responding to the shortfalls by:

- Salary/pay freeze 67%
- Delaying capital investments 66%
- Hiring freeze 64%
- Delay purchases and repairs 64%
- Across the board budget cuts 51%
- Layoffs 37%

County depts. or service areas receiving the most furlough, layoffs or cutbacks:

- Administration/budget/HR 44%
- Sheriff/Police/ Fire and Rescue 37%
- Roads/Highways/Transportation 35%
- Jails and Corrections 28%
- Health 25%

Many counties anticipate having fewer employees in their next fiscal year:

- 29 responding counties anticipate between 1 and 10 fewer employees
- 30 responding counties expect to have between 10 and 50 fewer employees
- 6 responding counties anticipate having between 400 and 500 fewer employees
- 6 responding counties anticipate having between 500 up to more than 1,000 fewer employees

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Disc Golf Course Makes Virginia Park a Money Winner

By *Charlie Ban, NACo Staff Writer*

Counties pour money like water into park facilities, but revenue rarely grows in its place.

For 19 years, York County, Va. managed to keep costs low at the 545-acre New Quarter Park by using it as a large picnic area, requiring reservations and not having any on-site staff. The county acquired the property through the Federal Surplus Land Act in the 1970s.

But as the county population grew—at 2.9 percent annually through the 1990s—it was harder to resist demands for more park facilities and greater access.

“People would tell us all the time that New Quarter Park was a hidden jewel and beg for us to do more, but earlier our population wouldn’t support the level of development that people wanted, and later our budget didn’t allow for us to do much there,” said Cheryl Sonderman, manager of York County’s Parks and Recreation Department. “Picnic shelter rental fees just barely covered what we spent on the park. Raising taxes wasn’t a viable option, either.”

York County, Va. used volunteer design and maintenance contributions to create a disc golf course that is bringing in revenue at New Quarter Park, allowing the county to staff and open the park with more amenities.

The population boom meant the county’s budget was focused on general infrastructure expansion, additional utility and public safety services, and new schools that came with a ballooning population. Parks and recreation did not have the same priority or budget.

Expanding the park facilities meant finding some kind of revenue source there. Trails, playgrounds, basketball and

volleyball courts, and picnic shelters would not cut it. A Frisbee disc golf course, however, had several revenue opportunities: concessions, equipment rental, daily and annual pass sales, tournament fees and golf merchandise.

The game is similar to golf, where players throw Frisbees from a tee toward a goal—usually a metal basket. Because the majority of the discs’ travel is through the air, however, the “holes” on the course do not have to be as well-manicured as a golf course fairway. Maintenance costs are relatively minimal, and volunteers continue to provide labor to maintain the course.

The citizen’s group interested in having a course at New Quarter Park—Newport News Disc Golf Club—offered to design, build and maintain the course on a volunteer basis. Staff estimates that at least \$50,000 was saved on labor costs for design and construction alone. York County provided all the materials necessary for construction of the course for approximately \$21,000, most of which was allocated in the county’s capital improvement plan.

“We were able to better meet the need of the community, but also be able to lessen the burden on county finances to bring that to fruition,” Sonderman said.

The revenue from the various disc golf operations has made it possible to staff the park.

Since the park opened with the new facilities, visitation jumped to nearly 32,000 people per year from 9,600 per

Photo courtesy of York County, Va.



year. Park revenue increased by 300 percent, but the 10 percent of park visitors who use the disc golf course made up 92 percent.

The course is a big draw in the region because it is the only disc golf course in the Williamsburg area, and Sonderman said it brings a diverse crowd to the park.

“It’s not just college-aged kids,” she said. “People of all ages have been using it, and it’s good to know the course doesn’t just appeal to a narrow segment of the population.”

The course has played host to several disc golf tournaments, and the park overall is the site of more community and private events. It’s a far cry from the bare bones department where Sonderman started working almost 33 years ago. As she prepares to retire, she sees New Quarter Park’s disc golf course as an important step in county recreation evolution.

“It’s a truly joint venture—we couldn’t support the new facilities at the park without the disc golf revenue, we couldn’t keep the disc golf course maintained so well without the help of the volunteers, but now people from all over the peninsula have a place to play,” she said. “Everyone’s life in the area is richer because this resource is here.”

Morgan Council Welcomes New Member

Digital County Report Released

The resignation of Morgan County Council Member David Gardner in May prompted the council to make an interim appointment. So, in June, the governing body selected Donald Matthews to fill the end of Gardner's term.

Gardner said his objective in applying was to get a jump-start on service to the Council that he was hoping to get eventually by being elected. He plans to run for the seat this Fall. This is Gardner's first stint as an elected official.

NACo and Digital Communities published their annual digital counties survey recently.

The general consensus is that counties continue to improve electronic services despite the tougher economic climate.

"The survey data we collected shows that counties of all sizes are rising to meet the current economic challenge. They are finding impressive new ways to use information and communication technology," said Todd Sanders, director of Digital Communities.

Following are among the findings:

- 78% are consolidating data

centers, servers, applications and staff to deal with economic crisis (up 10% from last year)

- The two highest priorities this year are the same for next: (1) Aligning the IT strategic plan the county's overall plan; (2) Disaster recovery/business continuity.
- 42% increase in use of social networks (ie Facebook, LinkedIn)
- 46% increase in use of video sharing sites (ie YouTube, Blip)
- 81% now offer online transaction processing (for paying taxes, tickets, etc.)



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UTAH COUNTIES INSURANCE POOL

RISK AWARENESS PROGRAM

The UCIP Loss Control Manager is customizing a comprehensive Risk Awareness Program (RAP) for Utah Counties. This UCIP Program is similar to the program created by the New Mexico Association of Counties (NMAC) in 2006 that has been proven successful over the years. The purpose of this UCIP RAP is to reduce member counties' cost of risk and the frequency and severity of loss. UCIP RAP will be a well structured 50 week training initiative designed to improve employee awareness of loss causation factors and to reduce each county's direct and indirect cost of risk. The program will consist of 50 customized presentations lasting 12-15 minutes each. Each week's presentation is site-specific to every department, targeting identifiable loss trends and potentially catastrophic exposures. The key to program success is the consistent frequent exposure to practical training. A county will experience greater results if the message is short and conveyed often, such as weekly. In the first year of implementation, New Mexico counties experienced an average of 40% reduction in claims and a 14% reduction in automobile accidents. UCIP will test a pilot program where county employee feedback and suggestions will be valuable to the success of UCIP RAP.

RISK MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

This year UCIP is taking a "from the ground up" approach to our Risk Management Conference. We will be providing intensive training on the essentials of Risk Management as it applies to the needs of UCIP Member Counties. This training is essential for Risk Managers, Elected Officials, Department Heads, Accident Review Board Members, Safety Committee Members, Insurance Coordinators and any other County Employees who are involved in the effort to reduce loss in their respective County. Join us, August 17-19, Festival Hall in Cedar City. Visit our website to view the agenda and register online. Four hours of CLE credit is available for the legal section on Thursday morning August 19.

UTAH PRIMA CHAPTER

Korby Siggard, UCIP Claims Manager, is the President of the Utah PRIMA Chapter. We invite member counties to attend the next luncheon meeting on August 26, 12:00-1:30 pm, at the Lehi City Hall. Attorney at Law, Bret Rawson, will speak on Law Enforcement Liability.

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