

## County elected, staff forced to embrace public servant concept



The Reflector, top-of-the-fold, the story "County change eliminates positions" reported on the ending of the environmental services department in Clark County.

Clark County Manager Mark Orjiako made the cuts, he said, for the county taxpayer and to save the county taxpayer. He estimates the savings at \$1.26 million the next two and a half years.

For Clark County Environmental Director Don Benton, the change is a bit puzzling as he processes the angles, rumors and straight facts. Benton had started investigating financial improprieties at the county. As a result, he felt his job was being threatened so he filed a whistleblower complaint.

It's just a little ironic the department created to resolve dysfunctions between departments regarding permitting created more dysfunction by looking into financial improprieties. Does this really come down to who likes and dislike whom or is there valid substance by both parties?

Benton said he has filed his complaint with the state, so we may find out more if an investigation is authorized. This tale will continue to unfold and I imagine we're in for more surprises from all sides, accompanied by more front page headlines. I suspect, as in most stories, there are two sides to tell.

My hope is the staff and representatives of Clark County can, at some point soon, figure out how to all get along, stay accountable and work together to gain back respect not only at the community level but the state level as well. We have some amazing individuals working for us and I have faith that great government can be accomplished.

My simple request is that all parties embrace the concept of being a public servant and put aside any personal agendas for the common good of Clark County.

**Laura Vennerl**  
General Manager, The Reflector

One of the reasons the department was formed was to help resolve the dysfunction between departments when it came to obtaining permits, as stated by Clark County Council Chair Marc Boldt. Now the dysfunction has been mitigated and has improved, Boldt said, adding the culture has changed and there's better communication.

Before the elimination of the department, Benton had started investigating financial improprieties at the county. As a result, he felt his job was being threatened so he filed a whistleblower complaint.

It's just a little ironic the department created to resolve dysfunctions between departments regarding permitting created more dysfunction by looking into financial improprieties. Does this really come down to who likes and dislike whom or is there valid substance by both parties?

Benton said he has filed his complaint with the state, so we may find out more if an investigation is authorized.

This tale will continue to unfold and I imagine we're in for more surprises from all sides, accompanied by more front page headlines. I suspect, as in most stories, there are two sides to tell.

My hope is the staff and representatives of Clark County can, at some point soon, figure out how to all get along, stay accountable and work together to gain back respect not only at the community level but the state level as well. We have some amazing individuals working for us and I have faith that great government can be accomplished.

My simple request is that all parties embrace the concept of being a public servant and put aside any personal agendas for the common good of Clark County.

**Laura Vennerl**  
General Manager, The Reflector

### REFLECTOR READER OPINION POLL

What's the best way to give our upcoming elections a boost? If they enter the a



Place your vote and view results at [www.thereflector.com](http://www.thereflector.com)

### Letters To The Editor

Readers are encouraged to express their views by writing to the editor of the Reflector. Letters are limited 400 words. Writers are limited to two letters per calendar quarter. All letters must be signed with name, address, plus phone number for verification. Not published are thank-you letters, form letters, letters critical of a private individual or business, or letters that the editor believes to be libelous. Letters are published as soon as space is available. Opinions expressed in the letters to the editor section of this newspaper do not necessarily reflect those of The Reflector or its staff.

Email: [Letters@TheReflector.com](mailto:Letters@TheReflector.com)

Mail: The Reflector, Attention: Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 2020, Battle Ground, WA 98604

### Benton statement misleading in saving millions of dollars

It appears Sen. Don Benton, R-Vancouver, has led *The Reflector* "Down the primrose path" during his recent interview.

The prevarication is ridiculous beyond belief. Based on Benton's record in Olympia and Clark County, this should never have been printed without independent verification. His claim, "I've saved the county millions and millions

of dollars since I took over the department" is beyond belief. Were this anywhere close to the truth, any experienced politician would have been bragging loudly. Benton has been silent.

I challenge Benton to bring forth verifiable facts to prove his claim.

**George Young**  
Vancouver

### County planning staff just wants the land

Clark County Citizens United, Inc. (CCCU) opposes the Cluster Ordinance and Alternative 2, discussed in a recent Reflector article.

The affected parcels are smaller than the proposed zones and the cluster is based on the zone density. It is well documented that all resource land in Clark County was determined via an aerial photo and staff interpretation. Land with trees was zoned forest and land without trees was zoned agriculture.

The Western Washington Growth Management Hearing Board's illegal activities lost in court, but the county ignored the court orders. Commissioners kept promising CCCU that corrections would be made, after the urban areas were complete. That never happened.

The old agriculture-forest was just a diversion, while the county zoned thousands of acres into a resource zone and lumped those appeals with the agriculture-forest appeal. This prevented landowners from their day in court.

Before 1994, most of that land was zoned 2.5 and 5 acres. Nan Hendrickson, of Camas, was on the Hearing Board at the time. The court said the county used an illegal unauthorized formula in the rural lands, and had an illegal end in sight. It was a well contrived plan, but, the county failed to follow the GMA law, by not using the Natural Resources Conservation Services soils manual for prime soil, even though they said they did. Staff is doing the same thing all over again in the 2016 Plan, and much more.

The manipulated planning assumptions said Office of Financial Management population projection numbers had enough land, according to law. But the mark was missed. When correct assumptions were used, it was discovered the county is only planning for half of what is required by law.

Clark County Councilor David Madore discovered this deception in his research and county staff does not want the public to know or understand any of this information.

Community Planning Director Oliver Orjiako said the county is using Alternative 2 clusters to comply with state law, but that is not true. The county does have to follow the GMA state law

when creating the 2016 Comprehensive Plan.

But, there is no law saying what that must look like. The majority of the counties in the state have the same rural and resource zoning as was proposed in the Alternative 4 option. One county doesn't have resource zones at all, because they don't have prime soil. The other counties were researched very carefully, before Alternative 4 was proposed.

All of their designations passed muster at the Hearing Board level and in the courts. In many instances, the courts gave even more, and that is what happened in CCCU's 1995 through 1999 court cases.

Clustering is and has always been a GMA allowed option, but Clark County is using it as a mandatory large lot zone. Many red flags are in the Alternative 2 proposal and the devil is in the details. But, it gives an idea as to what the county is not telling the people.

Clustering requires design standards, building envelopes, scenic view preservation, 85 percent remainder lot covenants, special water requirements, homes next to the road, and much more. Planning staff is good at making the proposal look warm and fuzzy, while seeming to believe that rural people are too dumb to figure it out. To accomplish that, the county limits the right information, given at the right time.

*The Reflector* has had very informative articles about the Comprehensive Plan and we hope you will continue. Former Publisher and Editor Marvin Case was good at getting important information out to the people in a timely fashion and people came to the hearings in the hundreds to protest the 1994 plan.

Staff finally admits they want the land preserved for the cities and refuse to honor the court orders and constitutional property rights. Planning staff is not concerned about preserving the resource, they just want the land. The whole process was and is illegal.

Clark County Citizens United, Inc. will have to go back in court to prove it.

**Carol Levanen**  
Executive Secretary, Clark County  
Citizens United, Battle Ground

### Beutler has adopted anti-freedom position

Discouraged to discover U.S. Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler-Camas, has adopted a personal freedom view comes to the rights of elected with common health issues.

By email from her, it is limited she supports measures that would abrogate an individual's right to self defense on the common mental health issues such as depression, grief, postpartum depression, PTSD, dementia, and memory loss. Under the law these illnesses do not exclude a person acting their constitution. In fact the law is very clear in that it states that a person must be adjudicated incompetent by the courts to be barred by law from a device of self defense. We can all support better enforcement of the law and deny that those who are legally from owning a firearm

are kept from them, we should oppose any effort to arbitrarily deny any person their rights who do not meet the criteria under the law.

However Rep. Beutler appears to be on board with such liberals as Hillary Clinton and President Obama in thinking that all because a person is afflicted by something as common as grief, they, and those who live with them, should be denied their rights without due process and means of appeal.

By this misguided criteria, any person who has ever had depression, sought help for grief, had PTSD, postpartum depression, or needed help with insomnia or memory loss would be, by the virtue of simply seeking help, barred from owning any means of self defense.

The Social Security Administration has already taken the first step in denying beneficiaries their rights via a rule change that

makes all beneficiaries ineligible due to any mental health issue. The VA routinely reports to the FBI costing thousands of our veterans their rights to self defense. And now the threat of Executive Action is being levied that would mandate doctors violate HIPPA and report any patient who seek medical help for common mental health issues such as depression to the FBI. And sadly it seems that Rep. Beutler supports these measures.

While I support her efforts to improve mental health care and help families with mentally ill members, I believe the rights of those who are not adjudicated as mentally deficient should be protected. No one should lose their rights because they suffer from common mental health issues such as depression, grief or insomnia.

**Raymond Williams**  
Battle Ground

### The Reflector Newspaper and Printing

Serving North Clark and South Cowlitz Counties, Washington

Office Location  
208 SE 1st St., Battle Ground, WA 98604

Office Hours  
Monday - Friday, 8 am - 5 pm

Mailing Address  
PO BOX 2020, Battle Ground, WA 98604

Phone  
360-687-5151