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New County Website

Whatcom County government will be launching a new website, tentatively, March 11. The old site will function as usual until that date. Once our new site is "live", anyone with a link to our old site will be forwarded automatically to the new one. On the main website screen of the new site, you will see several ways to locate information. There will be a row of "mega menus" at the top that are organized by county service or department as well as a "How do I?" tab and one that is just for "Safety & Justice". There is also a search engine you can simply enter text into and it will bring up items across the entire site that relate to your topic.

Below the mega menu buttons are what are referred to as "global navigation buttons". These also help you find specific information – if you are looking for e-services that might be available, a specific department, agendas and minutes, or you would like to view the frequently asked questions to see if the answer is there you can do so from these buttons.

Also on the main page are quick links to information, a news flash tab for current news, a county calendar and a spotlight section where we will be placing significant county information. Any citizen who wishes will be able to subscribe to notifications on topics like public works or health news or be updated automatically on county calendars for council meetings or planning meetings or any other calendar item either by specific area or through subscribing to just the main calendar. There will be maps and directions to county facilities. All of the e-service functionality we have now to process online payments will be available. For instance, things like court fees, ferry tickets, code compliance, crime reports, marriage licenses, public records requests and other county services will work as they do now.

Staff contact information will be included in departmental pages. There will also be links to the county's social media platforms as well as links to other third party sites such as elections results, the Washington Administrative Code, County Charter, and the Revised Code of Washington.

The county website project team in conjunction with our vendor, Civic Plus, a national website development and hosting firm that specializes in local government websites, has worked for several months on the design and functionality of the new site. This included moving hundreds of pages of content from the old site, along with training staff on how to use the content management system to perform updates on the new one.

Staff training on the content management system took place the first week of February, and now internally we are working on content revisions and updating the site. We are working with a cross-county team of website contributors through all our offices and departments who will be responsible for ensuring that the content is complete, up-to-date and that the navigation works well.

The launch of the new site is phase one of our website development. Over the next year, we will gradually add in more functionality such as online forms, the ability for citizens to track projects, and the option to provide feedback on topics in an open forum similar to a blog.

We welcome any feedback from the public on our new site. We'd like to know what you think – whether it is working for you in terms of the ease of obtaining information and whether it is the right information. There will be a feedback opportunity on the main page of the website once it goes live.

Whatcom County government is on the edge of a new threshold of technology advancements that will provide our citizens with greater access to everything you want to know. These advancements provide the ability for the public to utilize their own electronic devices to maximize access to county government, as well as making it possible for staff to enhance our customer service and be transparent in all areas as we build on the use of advanced technology.

We hope you like our new website. Stay tuned for details in the next few weeks.

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