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Local News

State of the Economy, MHG, MTA, & PUD



MASON COUNTY

Washington

The Economic Development Council (EDC) and the Shelton Chamber of Commerce held a joint luncheon at Mason General Hospital to hear from Mason General Hospital (District#1), Mason Transit Authority (MTA) and PUD#3 regarding their economic outlook. All three organizations were positive regarding the outlook for the immediate future.

Mason General Hospital Chief Operating Officer Eileen Branscome, shared how the hospital has elected to take an unconventional approach to their strategic plan by focusing solely on the improvement of the care delivery system and diving deep into components necessary to deliver exceptional care to the community. The entire patient care system requires not only the hospital, but also other social agencies to provide total health care. It is an integrated system and while there have been improvements; there is still failure and frustration at times when interconnections with outside resources do not happen. Branscome stated "all the gears have to mesh" in the patient's treatment. Communicating and working across multiple resources reduces the cost of health care for the patient and the hospital- sharing information and linking patients to the right care, at the right place, at the right time.

Mason Transit Authority's Board President Mike Olsen gave the state of MTA: The outlook is positive and the budget is healthy. Routes have been changed and added to meet the needs of commuters. There is a new route from Skokomish Tribal Center to Lake Cushman, and is their fastest growing route. Additional work routes have been started, going from Shelton to Bremerton and Shelton to Olympia. The big highlight of the year for MTA was the National 2015 Rural Transportation Award. The new transit center is the first of its kind as it is both a Community Center (with over 990 users in the first month and over 1200 users scheduled in the second month) and a Transportation Center. The building is a LEEDs (leadership energy and environmental design) Building, and is "LEEDs Silver certified".

PUD's Public Information and Government Relations Manager Joel Myer reported the Pacific North West's energy is the cleanest - stating we are 97% carbon free. 96% of the PUD's energy comes from hydroelectricity sources (Bonneville Power Administration). PUD's participation in benchmarking won them an award for being a "Reliable Public Power Provider" winning a "Diamond level" award. The challenge facing the PUD according to Myer is to control the rising cost of electricity. PUD is seeking alternative energy sources and wants to be a resource for customers by developing cost affordable ways to implement programs to employ new methods of energy generation. Meyer talked about Net Metering; putting a solar panel on your roof to generate your own electricity. Looking ahead, the PUD's strategic focus continues to be: providing safe reliable service 24/7 for both their electricity and fiber optics operations.

Community Correspondent, Jerry Eckenrode - KMAS Newsradio, June 15, 2015

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