

Spokane County Treasurer

Fiscal Year 2011
with select 2012 Information

A Report To Our Citizens

Rob Chase, Spokane County Treasurer



From the Treasurer - Rob Chase

2011 was my first year as Spokane County Treasurer.

I quickly discovered I inherited a staff that was exceptionally experienced and dedicated to the goal of superior customer service to the taxpayers and Districts of Spokane County.

For my part, I needed to learn as much as I could about being Treasurer of Spokane County. I have worked toward this goal by periodically sitting down with each of my staff to learn their procedures and assure them I am approachable to their suggestions.

I have sought to fulfill my promises. One, to understand everything I sign for, whether it's a Bond Issue or ordering supplies. Secondly, to increase information available to the public. Information can be found on our website and the bulletin board outside our office. Additionally, I strive to respond quickly to solve issues experienced by taxpayers.

As County Treasurer, I Chair the Finance Committee which invests an average of \$750 million. I am working with the Washington State Treasurer's Association to broaden our investment choices to other vehicles besides bonds, but which will still meet our goals of safety, liquidity, and diversity. Bonds currently have returns below the rate of inflation. I have also recommended changes to the Debt Policy Committee and the Bond Counsel contract that would enhance transparency to the Public.

In the Treasurer's Office we formed Committees to re-visit our values and goals, and to make the web site more user-friendly and informative. We are still brainstorming ways to take advantage of technical breakthroughs in cost savings, while maintaining a high level of customer service. We currently have several projects underway to take advantage of trends in E-Commerce and services to our Districts.

For decades, it has been the County's practice to pay banking fees for our Districts. Based on the results of an Audit by the Washington State Auditor's Office, we can no longer continue this practice. Beginning this year, our Districts will participate in the sharing of those costs. Furthermore, we negotiated a new banking contract that will save approximately \$100,000 in 2012.

In closing, we are working on introducing legislation that will eliminate major penalties on delinquent property taxes and allow taxpayers the option of making partial payments.

In your service,

Rob Chase

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Mission Statement

The Spokane County Treasurer's Office is committed to respectfully serving our customers in an effective and timely manner while responsibly managing public resources.

Full Time Employees	25
Real Estate Parcels	216,680
Operating Budget (2012)	\$1,803,088
Investments (12/31/2011)	\$ 768,882,448

Accomplishments

Real Estate Excise System Upgrade



In 2010 our Excise Tax System was upgraded. This upgrade was many months in the making and allows the staff to process Excise Tax at multiple windows. The ability to process multiple affidavits helps our customers get their transactions completed in a more timely and efficient manner. Another benefit

added to this new system in 2011 is how the affidavits are scanned at the counter making them available to the public much quicker than in years past. The Department of Revenue is another benefactor of our upgrade as we now have the ability to upload all of the property sales data electronically, elimi-

nating the need to box up and mail copies of the physical documents each month. This not only saves the Treasurer's office time and money, but the DOR as well. Over the coming year, we are looking to expand on further efficiencies within this system. ■

More Efficient Tax Payment Processing

Electronic payments are the way of the future and the Treasurer's Office sees this first hand. By accepting various methods of payment (bill payer, e-check, credit / debit cards), the processing time is greatly reduced allowing us more time to focus on other duties within the office. Here's

an example of this change to payment processing: A taxpayer schedules their tax payment through their own banking institution. We receive an electronic file of those payments, which can be uploaded into our tax system. Prior to this we received a stack of individual checks, which was very labor intensive to

process. To view other options for submitting tax payments, please visit our web site at www.spokanecounty.org/ ■

"Electronic payments are the way of the future and the Treasurer's Office sees this first hand." ■

About Citizen Centric Reporting

This is the first Citizen Centric Report produced by the Spokane County Treasurer. The Association of Government Accountants (AGA) developed guidance on producing Citizen Centric Reporting as a method to demonstrate accountability to residents and answer the question: Are we better off today than we were last year? Additional details can be found at the AGA website: www.agacgfm.org

Additional information on Spokane County Treasurer's Office is available at www.spokanecounty.org/treasurer

E-Commerce Continues

The Accounting Department, in working closely with our bank, has been able to utilize available technology to streamline our warrant processes and at the same time become a little *greener*. In the past as warrants were redeemed and cleared the bank they were physically returned to our office for reconciling, imaging and storage. Now we receive an image file each day and we digitally store the warrants. The digital image displays the front and back of each warrant which al-

lows us to email or print the image for research or documentation. Each month we transfer the images to a CD and send the disk to the respective districts for their use and record keeping. This process allowed us to eliminate the imaging step, and the storage of the physical redeemed warrants. Further, by using software we are able to retrieve the digital image at any time which provides quick and easy access when we need to view, research or provide information regarding a warrant. ■

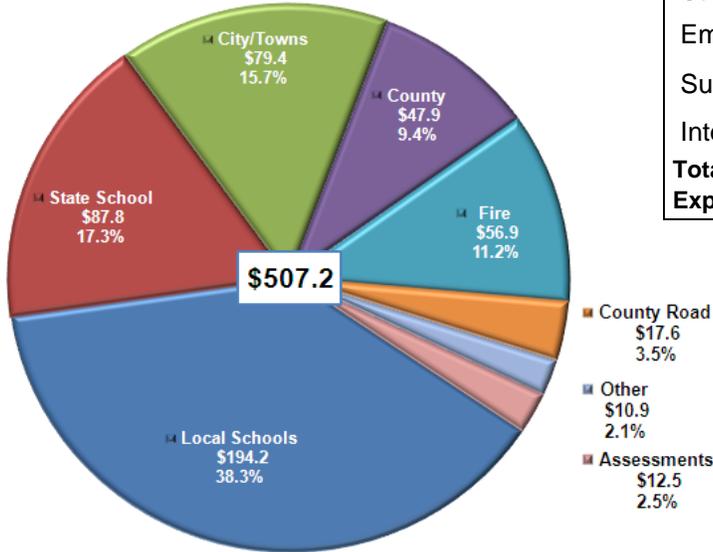


"A Report To Our Citizens" was a winner of the AGA Citizen-Centric Report for the Fiscal Year Ending 2011

Finances

2012 Property Tax

Taxes and Assessment Billed for 2012
In Million \$



Treasurer's Office Budget

Expense Budget by Account Type

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>
Salary and Wages	\$1,031,029	\$1,004,400
Employee Benefits	453,367	431,861
Supplies, Services & Other	324,373	334,827
Interfund Services	32,000	32,000
Total Department General Fund Expense Budget	\$1,840,769	\$1,803,088

2011 Production

Tax Collected	\$ 483,213,488
Cash Receipts Processed	
Count	28,990
Amount	\$ 78,736,185
Excise Affidavits Processed	
Count	13,009
Amount	\$ 20,625,611
Phone Calls Received	28,317
Warrants Processed	
Count	105,066
Amount	\$ 2,357,467,883
Investment Pool	
Average Rate	1.10%
Average Balance	\$ 786,777,000

2011—2012 Statement Comparison

Levied Taxes

	2011	2012	Change	% Change
Local School	\$ 194,672,999	\$ 194,247,156	\$ (425,843)	-0.2%
State School	85,275,376	87,802,439	2,527,063	3.0%
City and Towns	77,502,884	79,384,823	1,881,940	2.4%
Fire Districts	57,050,621	56,942,723	(107,898)	-0.2%
County	47,175,732	47,915,797	740,065	1.6%
County Road	17,336,211	17,591,966	255,754	1.5%
Library	10,932,132	10,757,683	(174,449)	-1.6%
Transportation	68,425	70,003	1,578	2.3%
Cemetery Districts	65,981	67,021	1,040	1.6%
Park and Rec	8,441	8,378	(63)	-0.7%
Total Levied Taxes	\$ 490,088,802	\$ 494,787,990	\$ 4,699,187	1.0%

Assessments

	2011	2012	Change	% Change
Soil Conservation	\$ 964,597	\$ 967,417	\$ 2,820	0.3%
Weed	350,889	343,048	(7,841)	-2.2%
State Fire	742,725	741,978	(747)	-0.1%
Aquifer	1,444,220	1,430,750	(13,470)	-0.9%
Flood	200,695	206,794	6,099	3.0%
Irrigation	4,978,890	5,162,445	183,555	3.7%
Stormwater & Drainwater	3,720,140	3,601,621	(118,520)	-3.2%
Total Assessments	\$ 12,402,157	\$ 12,454,053	\$ 51,896	0.4%
Total	\$ 502,490,959	\$ 507,242,043	\$ 4,751,084	0.9%

Independent Audit: As part of a County wide audit, the Spokane County Treasurer's Office is audited on an annual basis and contributes a major portion of the revenues and statements included in the Spokane County Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). For further financial information visit our website at: www.spokanecounty.org/treasurer.

Looking Forward

Goals for 2012

In 2011, we made many changes to systems and processes within our office to improve efficiencies for serving all taxpayers. Many of these changes were made in preparation of future enhancements. Some of the next steps for improving the Treasurer's Office in 2012 include:

- Expand our tax payment options to include credit / debit card transactions within the office and over the phone, as well as add the ability for taxpayers to make tax payments at outside locations across the country.
- Develop a gateway for the electronic submission and processing of Excise Affidavits.
- Offer statement delivery electronically, via email or online.
- Create a central processing portal for Districts to submit Cash Receipts electronically.
- Continue to utilize our Employee-Led Committees to look at all office processes and explore new ways of making improvements to systems within the office. ■

Our Core Values



Tell Us What You Think

Is there something you would like to see reported in this letter or further information given on something shown? Please contact us and let us know.

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www.spokanecounty.org/treasurer

Employee-Led Committees:

The economic down-turn has effected many in our region and Spokane County is no exception. With shrinking revenues and fewer staff, we are all forced to find new solutions for the challenges ahead. In late 2011, the Treasurer and management focused on ways to improve the Treasurer's Office and they sought the advice of their staff. "Who knows the workings of the operation better than those who do the work?", said County Treasurer, Rob Chase. The office, as a whole, determined the areas needing improvement and Employee-led committees were formed and tasked with mapping a path to achieve the desired results. As of May 2012, three committees were formed.

The **Website Committee** reviewed and revamped the Treasurer's Office website giving it a different look and feel. There is a great deal of taxpayer and financial information available as well as links to most of the departments and Districts we serve. Please visit the site and let them know what you think. www.spokanecounty.org/treasurer.

The **Customer Service Committee** was created to define and reinforce quality customer service practices, establish standards for communicating and interacting with all users as well as provide a solid foundation for training and continued learning for our staff.

The **Process Reengineering Group** identified and prioritized processes and procedures in need of redesign in order to gain efficiency and productivity. Each process identified will be further evaluated and reworked with a focus on creating value for the county and the customers we serve.

Each of our committees is a work in progress and will continue to evolve as we strive to produce positive results.

As we look forward, our resources may be limited but our goals are not. We are dedicated to creating a Customer-centric environment and wish to provide quality service using innovative, *out of the box* thinking. ■