

Clerks Office/Finance

Cyd Donk, Permit Assistant was recently recognized in the Everett Herald (Attachment) for her outstanding customer service support. Cyd assisted a family in getting their passports in time for trip to Germany.

The City's passport services have been extremely busy since January 1st issuing over 207 passports to the Sultan community. In comparison, the total number of passports issued for 2006 was 378.

Community Development

The Open House on Tuesday, March 13 was extremely successful. More than 46 people signed in. City staff estimate that at least double than number attended the event.

The most popular exhibits included the transportation map showing current and proposed roadways for the update to the Transportation Element, and the map showing future development.

Less popular, although just as important, were the exhibits about the sewer rate study, the storm water utility and capital improvement plan.

Staff will propose a future open house event to draw more attention to these projects and seek community feedback.

Police

The Town Meeting to discuss police services and funding was very successful. City staff estimate that approximately 150 people attended the Town Meeting. There were many questions regarding the City's decision to do an apples-to-apples comparison with the County Sheriff's Department contract model.

City staff met together last week to identify what documentation needs to be forwarded to the County including an inventory of equipment that the City might want to transfer to the County as part of the contract negotiations.

The Council is tentatively scheduled to review the budget comparisons at its April 24, 2007 meeting. The Council may want to consider holding the May 31, Town Meeting for a discussion of the contract proposal or schedule a special meeting on May 10, 2007.

Mark your calendars for these upcoming events:

Association of Washington Cities Annual Conference

AWC will host their annual conference in Tacoma this year from June 12-15

Local News

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Need a passport? You'll have to get in line
One Monroe family almost found out the hard way about the logjam of applications.

*By Yoshiaki Nohara
Herald Writer*

A new federal rule aimed at improving national security means longer waits for U.S. air travelers even before they get in the line at an airport.

Passport applications are facing waits of 10 weeks nationwide. The logjam nearly cost a Monroe family the chance to visit a relative in Germany.

Elyse Resler, 17, and her brother Ryan, 16, received passports Wednesday - two days before they plan to leave with others for Germany.

"I thought I would cry. I couldn't believe it," Kathy Resler, the mother of Elyse and Ryan, said.

When the Resler family applied for the passports eight weeks ago, they were advised they would get them within four to six weeks, Kathy Resler said.

That was before the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative took effect on Jan. 23, requiring passports for flights to Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda. A driver's license used to suffice.

The federal rule, a result of the Sept. 11 Commission's recommendations, is intended to bolster national security at U.S. borders. As early as January 2008, the law could cover people traveling by land and sea, including ferry riders.

March is a busy time for passport workers as people plan for summer vacations and spring breaks, said Edgar Vasquez, a spokesman for the U.S. Department of State.

In February, the department issued about 1.2 million passports, Vasquez said. That's up from about 975,000 in February 2006.

Now federal officials say that it takes eight to 10 weeks to receive a passport. The cost is \$97 per adult. People can expedite the process by paying an extra \$60 to get a passport within three to four weeks.

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The department has increased its work force and plans to hire another 150 workers this year to keep up with increasing demand, and federal workers are working overtime, Rep. Rick Larsen, D-Washington, said.

"It's a huge problem, and the problem has been reflected in phone calls to my office," Larsen said Wednesday.

Larsen questions whether the new rule would improve national security.

"Checking citizenship does not mean checking security," he said, adding that the measure could damage trade and tourism.

In Washington, state lawmakers are trying to authorize new enhanced driver's licenses, which would let drivers travel between Washington and British Columbia without needing to get passports. Gov. Chris Gregoire and British Columbia Premier Gordon Campbell are trying to streamline the crossings in preparation for the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, B.C., and Whistler, B.C.

Snohomish County officials are busy processing passport applications. The county treasurer's office handled 197 applications in February, which is up from 134 in February 2006, said Vicki McCormick, the county's revenue officer.

"It's more than we expected," McCormick said.

Sandy Roberts, a travel consultant at Passport Travel in Mill Creek, said some people are choosing to cruise to Mexico rather than wait for weeks to get passports. She's directing people to apply early for passports at Mill Creek City Hall, two blocks from the travel agency.

"We have brochures and applications here," Roberts said.

In Monroe, Kathy Resler rejoiced Wednesday when two passports arrived.

Her children - Ryan, Elyse and Jessica, 21 - have been planning to visit their relative Don Heath in Germany with their grandfather and cousin. They want to go there this month before Heath, an Army sergeant, leaves for his third tour of duty in Iraq.

In mid-January, the family applied for passports for Ryan and Elyse at Sultan City Hall. Then, they paid about \$1,500 for three nonrefundable airplane tickets.

As Kathy Resler checked the status of the applications online, the government kept pushing back the issuance. This week she learned the date had been pushed to March 18 - two days after her children were scheduled to fly to Frankfurt.

"I panicked," she said.

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She called the passport service center again and again. She was never able to reach a real person.

Resler contacted the offices of Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell and called Sultan's permit assistant, Cyd Donk.

Donk called a passport center in Seattle and was referred to a center in New Hampshire. On Tuesday she sent an emergency fax to the New Hampshire center.

It turned out that the applications were stuck in South Carolina. On Tuesday, federal workers mailed out the two passports by FedEx.

Kathy Resler received them around 11 a.m. on Wednesday.

That was a "godsend," she said.

Reporter Yoshiaki Nohara: 425-339-3029 or yohara@heraldnet.com.

Know the law

The first phase of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative took effect Jan. 23.

All travelers by air between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda must present a passport.

As early as January 2008, the second phase of the initiative may cover travelers by land and sea, including ferry riders.

Getting a passport now takes about 10 weeks because of the high volume of applications, according to the U.S. Department of State.

The cost is \$97 for people 16 or older and \$82 for those under 16. Applicants can expedite the process for an additional \$60 to receive a passport within three to four weeks.

In Snohomish County, people can apply for a passport at several post offices and city halls, including the Snohomish County Treasurer's Office at 3000 Rockefeller Ave., Everett, and the Everett post office at 3102 Hoyt Ave., Everett.

For detailed information about applying for a passport, go to www.travel.state.gov.