

New county Public Works director set for challenges

Liane Welch comes with experience at Portland Public Works, as well as private business

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Headlight-Herald Staff

TILLAMOOK — Liane Welch, the county's newly hired director of Public Works, has found her dream job.

She and her husband, Carl Welch, have been longtime vacationers to Tillamook County — in fact, Carl even proposed to Liane on one of their early trips to the coast. They savor the recreation offered locally — fishing, crabbing, hunting and four-wheeling. Their three grown children are attending college.

A machinist for Freightliner, Carl Welch is looking forward to eventually starting a business locally, perhaps involving cabinet making. Liane Welch is already getting down to the business of getting acquainted with the 32-member Public Works staff and the work they do, as well as tackling the challenges faced by Public Works, such as the uncertainty of funding and the rising cost of asphalt and other materials.

Welch, 44, was formerly with the City of Portland Public Works Department, where she worked more than 10 years. She was principal engineer oversee-



LIANE WELCH

ing a \$16-million budget and 102 employees — “and I knew everyone,” she said.

As part of the city's senior management team, she was responsible for the overall management of the city's street infrastructure. Frankly enthusiastic about her job — then and now — she said she loves the “doing things” part of public works, and hopes to be even more hands-on as county Public Works director.

Prior to working with the City of Portland, Welch said, she spent more than nine years as an engineer in the private sector. She worked at construction monitoring for road projects and at

Portland International Airport, as well as projects in environmental engineering and watershed management.

She earned a bachelor of science and a master's degree in civil engineering from Portland State University.

County commissioners last week welcomed Welch, who started on the job Oct. 23. They also thanked Pat Oakes, engineering project supervisor with Public Works, for his work as interim director following the resignation of former director Aaron Suko.

Commissioner Mark Labhart said Welch was the unanimous choice of the selection group, which included the three commissioners, as well as Curt Schonbrod, chair of the Roads Advisory Committee, and Kathleen Ryan, chair of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee.

“You're going to be a great fit for Tillamook County,” Commission Chair Tim Josi told Welch.

Welch said she is looking forward to becoming an active member of the community, with a particular interest in watershed issues. Her aims, she said, are to work toward “making a difference, providing leadership and being a good team player with the county commissioners.”