

## **Columbia Section**

Since October 10, 1950

## Newsletter

March 2011

#### **American Society of Civil Engineers**

Our web site: http://sections.asce.org/columbia/index.html

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# Columbia Section Meeting

Date: March 30, 2011

Place: Shilo Inn, George Washington Way, Richland

**Meal:** Buffet (Chef's choice) - \$15 per person

Please pay cash or check to treasurer at meeting

**Topic: Challenges and Opportunities with Clearwater Avenue** 

Speaker: Steve Stairs, PE – City of Richland

Lunch will start at 11:30, and the presentation will begin at Noon.

RSVP to: Chris Ells cells@jub.com (509)783-2144

#### President's Remarks:

Dear Members,

For those who have been at the last couple meetings, you know I have been trying to line up a meeting out at Washington State University - Tri-Cities, however it looks like that won't work out after all, but that is fine because it gives us the opportunity to hear from Steve Stairs of the City of Richland about a road project that has recently broken ground.

Steve will be presenting on the Clearwater Avenue and Leslie Road Roundabout. This project has a variety of challenges associated with it, including being located on the boundary between two cities and a county and in close proximity to wetlands, a railroad and an interstate. Steve and his staff had to juggle all of these interests on top of the challenges of a two lane roundabout. It should be very interesting.

Now for some section business. There are only three more meetings before we will be voting on new section officers. Typically we would be getting a new Secretary/Treasurer and all the other officers would move "up" a spot. We have talked to a couple people about interest in serving in section leadership, but I wanted to offer the opportunity to everyone. Serving as an officer gives you an opportunity to make a lot of professional connections you may not have, as well as get you and your company more into the public eye. If you are interested in serving as a section officer

Please contact myself or one of the other current officers and we can answer questions and get you on the ballot if you would like.

Now in Washington engineering news, if you haven't heard already the Washington State House of Representatives voted in favor of HB 1900 which would establish continuing education requirements for engineers. The bill is currently in committee in the State Senate. You can read more about it at <a href="http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?year=2011&bill=1900">http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?year=2011&bill=1900</a>. I will tell you that ASCE has endorsed the bill as part of their ASCE Policy Statement 425 - Continuing Professional Development. I will also tell you that personally I am opposed to it. I think the bill has good intentions, but in my experience required professional development hours are costly, time consuming and typically of little value. I personally try to continue my learning and development as a professional engineer, but these sort of bureaucratic requirements have little impact on the engineered product, while taking more of our time and money.

Either way, there is a good chance that you have an opinion on the issue and now is the time to let your State Senator know that opinion.

That is all that I have for this month, and I hope to see you at the meeting on the 30th. It should be a good one (and in one of the ballrooms this month). I hope to see you all there.

### Paul Smith

**ASCE Columbia Section President** 

As a counter point to Paul Smith, I personally am in favor of having professional development hours as part of our professional registration. Oregon has had a similar legislation for many years and I have not found this to be a bureaucratic requirement. The meetings that ASCE provides are one avenue of achieving the personal development hours as well as active membership. I consider my self to be a life long learner and seek opportunities to learn and be better at our profession. Practicing engineers must remain current with issues and advancements in technology. Engineers need to stay current on a wide range of matters covering many different aspects of design. While some of the fundamental principles of engineering do not change, such as mathematics, many others do, including: regulations, technology, construction techniques and environmental best practices. Requiring professional development ensures that we stay current and involved in our community. Many professions require professional development and I believe that this in turn raises the bar for professional engineers. I also encourage sending an email to your senators to voice your opinion.

Tom Szymoniak, PE