
Last Week at Rotary...Municipal Court Judge Gary Milliman

At the February 14 meeting of the Port Orford Rotary Club, Municipal Court Judge Gary Milliman presented. Brookings, Gold Beach and Port Orford all have a Municipal Court. For Port Orford, Municipal Court is held every Thursday at 3PM at the Port Orford City Hall. The Court hears cases



involving municipal code violations and traffic violations. They do not handle DUI or other types of moving violations as these are considered criminal cases.

The Court has been expanded to handle traffic violations so that people can attend court in their communities and not have to travel to Gold Beach to address these citations. By holding Court in the individual communities, the cities can capture the revenue from those citations. Most traffic violations are speeding tickets. If people don't pay the ticket or appear in court, they are deemed guilty by default and their license will be suspended through the Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles.

A day in court starts with the judge reviewing letters received regarding traffic and municipal code violations (MVs). MVs are typically illegal campers on properties, occupation of uninhabitable buildings, dangerous buildings, or complaints about debris, weeds or animal nuisance. Most MVs can be resolved without a fine as the focus is on enforcing compliance with municipal codes, not punishment.

Judge Milliman also serves on the Truancy Court in Brookings for students not satisfying the attendance requirements for high school graduation. The intent of Truancy Court is to help schools and parents address truancy and increase graduation rates. Parents are responsible for student attendance, and since instituting this court activity unexcused absences have decreased by 24%, and there has been an increase in high school graduation.

Currently, Municipal Court Judges are not required to be attorneys, and Judge Milliman falls into the Municipal Court norm as not being an attorney. The Judge warned that there is legislation proposed in the state legislature to require municipal court judges to be attorneys. House Bill 2614 and Senate Bill 776 would eliminate a municipal court judge's ability to suspend driving licenses. Judge Milliman is concerned that if there are no consequences to speeding, like license suspension, this could pose a threat to public safety if it is well known that there are no repercussions for speeding. This will be something to watch in the state legislature this year. Also, there may not be enough attorneys willing to serve as municipal court judges in rural communities.

We thank Judge Milliman for serving our community and for helping keep our communities safe.
