



# FRANKLIN COUNTY

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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County Administrator Brian Dandel

September 19, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS DO NOT RENEW HUMAN SERVICES CONTRACT WITH BENTON COUNTY

PASCO, WA – The Franklin County Board of Commissioners has announced its decision not to renew its human services contract with Benton County, effective September 30th, and would like to provide clarity on some misinformation. This difficult choice was made after Benton County presented a new agreement with financial terms the Franklin County Commissioners deemed untenable and unfair to its taxpayers. The decision stems from a letter dated August 26th, in which Benton County issued an ultimatum. The letter stated that if Franklin County did not agree to a new, significantly more expensive contract by September 30th, Benton County would assume Franklin County did not wish to continue the agreement and would begin separating human services work and related grant funding. We are providing that letter, which will clearly indicate that, in fact, Benton County desired to split human services up by September 30th if the Franklin County Commissioners didn't acquiesce to the new proposal.

The proposed new contract demanded an additional several hundred thousand dollars every year for the foreseeable future from Franklin County. This increase would have required the county to either lay off multiple employees, divert funds from its road maintenance budget, or both. For Franklin County taxpayers, who rely on their tax dollars for road upkeep and maintenance, this was considered an unacceptable burden. "We are disappointed by this outcome," said Chairman Clint Didier. The financial demands from Benton County were simply unreasonable, especially given the significant increase in costs and the ultimatum we were given. Benton County was fully aware that our sales tax revenue had diminished by an average of 15% per month, yet they asked us to make an impossible choice."

In addition to paying numerous fees under the previous agreement, the new proposal demanded an additional 20% to come directly from Franklin County's general fund for the homelessness grant. The maximum amount that can be charged under the homelessness grant is 10% and that is imposed by the state. The proposed fees in the agreement exceeded amounts allowed under state statute, which the Board found to be onerous to Franklin County taxpayers. The proposed agreement would also require the county to split the cost of two additional Benton County employees. Franklin County would have no say in the salary or benefits of these new staff members.

The Franklin County Board of Commissioners wishes to clarify that any narrative suggesting an enormous interruption of services is completely false. Outside of the human services agreement at hand, Franklin and Benton Counties have joint agreements, separate from the human services contract, with the State of Washington for all programs mentioned in the recent article. All the concerns about the programs going away or being affected are not accurate. The homelessness grant will not be lost; its administration will simply be transferred to the Department of Commerce, which will directly work with Franklin County to administer the funds, and at a rate that is affordable and doesn't exceed the state statute. Furthermore, Franklin County has secured the necessary funding to hire positions for Veterans Services, and these positions will be

advertised immediately. In fact, by not signing the proposed agreement, which would have necessitated employee layoffs and a diversion of funds from road maintenance, Franklin County will now have more resources available for its veterans and residents.

The Franklin County Board of Commissioners is confident it made the right decision by protecting its employees and its road maintenance budget. While this was not the desired outcome, the Board was given a short window to respond to an ultimatum that would bind the county to excessive costs (several hundred thousand dollars every year) for several years, that again, would most likely have to be paid for by laying off mission-critical positions in Franklin County and diverting road funds. In the end, the Franklin County Commissioners didn't believe this would be a prudent financial move for one single agreement. The Franklin County Board of Commissioners is open to a reasonable proposal from Benton County, but the current proposal is not reasonable, as previously mentioned.

As a result of this decision, Franklin County has notified the appropriate state agencies, including the Department of Commerce and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), regarding the vote to not renew the agreement.

Respectfully,  
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