

COLUMBIA BANKING SYSTEM INC
Form DEF 14A
March 19, 2007
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SCHEDULE 14A INFORMATION

Proxy Statement Pursuant to Section 14(a) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (Amendment No.)

Filed by the Registrant

Filed by a Party other than the Registrant

Check the appropriate box:

- | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Preliminary Proxy Statement | <input type="checkbox"/> Confidential, for Use of the Commission Only (as permitted by Rule 14a-6(e)(2)) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Definitive Proxy Statement | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Definitive Additional Materials | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soliciting Material Pursuant to §240.14a-11(c) or §240.14a-12 | |

COLUMBIA BANKING SYSTEM, INC.

(Name of Registrant as Specified In Its Charter)

(Name of Person(s) Filing Proxy Statement, if other than the Registrant)

Payment of Filing Fee (Check the appropriate box):

- No fee required.
- Fee computed on table below per Exchange Act Rules 12a(6)(i)(1) and 0-11.

(1) Title of each class of securities to which transaction applies:

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(1) Amount Previously Paid:

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(3) Filing Party:

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**1301 A Street
Tacoma, Washington 98402**

March 19, 2007

Dear Shareholder:

We are pleased to invite you to Columbia Banking System's Annual Meeting of Shareholders. The meeting will be at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 25, 2007 at the Greater Tacoma Convention & Trade Center, 1500 Broadway, Tacoma, Washington 98402.

At the meeting, you and the other shareholders will be asked to approve the election of nine directors to the Columbia Board. You also will have the opportunity to hear what has happened in our business in the past year and to ask questions. Please note that this year's proxy materials have been expanded to include the additional information required by the SEC's new executive compensation rules. You will find additional information concerning Columbia and its operations, including its audited financial statements, in the enclosed Annual Report for the year ended December 31, 2006.

We hope that you can join us on April 25th. **Whether or not you plan to attend, please sign and return your proxy card as soon as possible.** Your opinion and your vote are important to us. Voting by proxy will not prevent you from voting in person if you attend the meeting, but it will ensure that your vote is counted if you are unable to attend.

William T. Weyerhaeuser

Chairman

Melanie J. Dressel

President and CEO

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF SHAREHOLDERS

TO BE HELD APRIL 25, 2007

TIME	1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 25, 2007
PLACE	Greater Tacoma Convention & Trade Center 1500 Broadway, Tacoma, Washington
ITEMS OF BUSINESS	<ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) To elect nine directors to serve on the Board until the 2008 Annual Meeting of Shareholders.(2) To transact such other business as may properly come before the meeting or any adjournment thereof.
RECORD DATE	You are entitled to vote at the annual meeting and at any adjournments or postponements thereof if you were a shareholder at the close of business on Wednesday, March 1, 2007.
VOTING BY PROXY	Please submit your proxy card as soon as possible so that your shares can be voted at the annual meeting in accordance with your instructions. For specific instructions on voting, please refer to the instructions in the Proxy Statement and on your enclosed proxy form.
By Order of the Board	
Cathleen L. Dent	
Secretary	

This proxy statement and the accompanying proxy card are being distributed on or about March 19, 2007

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COLUMBIA BANKING SYSTEM, INC.

1301 A Street

Tacoma, Washington 98402-4200

(253) 305-1900

PROXY STATEMENT

The Board of Directors is soliciting proxies for this year's Annual Meeting of Shareholders. This Proxy Statement contains important information for you to consider when deciding how to vote on the matters brought before the meeting. Please read it carefully.

The Board set March 1, 2007 as the record date for the meeting (the Record Date). Shareholders who owned Columbia common stock on that date are entitled to vote at the meeting, with each share entitled to one vote. There were 16,151,962 shares of Columbia common stock outstanding on the Record Date.

Voting materials, which include this Proxy Statement and a proxy card, together with the 2006 Annual Report, are being mailed to shareholders on or about March 19, 2007.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE MEETING

Why am I receiving this Proxy Statement and proxy card?

You are receiving this Proxy Statement and proxy card because you own shares of Columbia common stock. This Proxy Statement describes issues on which we would like you to vote.

When you sign the proxy card you appoint William T. Weyerhaeuser and Melanie J. Dressel as your representatives at the meeting. Mr. Weyerhaeuser and Ms. Dressel will vote your shares at the meeting as you have instructed on the proxy card. This way, your shares will be voted even if you cannot attend the meeting.

Who is soliciting my proxy and who is paying the cost of solicitation?

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Columbia's Board of Directors is sending you this Proxy Statement in connection with its solicitation of proxies for use at the 2007 Annual Meeting. Certain directors, officers and employees of Columbia and its banking subsidiaries, Columbia State Bank and Bank of Astoria, may solicit proxies by mail, telephone, facsimile or in person.

Columbia will pay for the costs of solicitation. Columbia does not expect to pay any compensation for the solicitation of proxies, except to brokers, nominees and similar record holders for reasonable expenses in mailing proxy materials to beneficial owners of Columbia common stock. However, management may, if it determines it necessary to obtain the requisite shareholder vote, retain the services of a proxy solicitation firm.

What am I voting on?

At the Annual Meeting you will be asked to vote on the election of nine directors to serve on the Board until the 2008 Annual Meeting of Shareholders or until their successors have been elected and have qualified.

Who is entitled to vote?

Only shareholders who owned Columbia common stock as of the close of business on the Record Date are entitled to receive notice of the Annual Meeting and to vote the shares that they held on that date at the meeting, or any postponement or adjournment of the meeting.

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How do I vote?

You may vote your shares either in person at the Annual Meeting or by proxy. To vote by proxy, you should mark, date, sign and mail the enclosed proxy card in the prepaid envelope provided. If your shares are registered in your own name and you attend the meeting, you may deliver your completed proxy card in person. Street name shareholders, that is, those shareholders whose shares are held in the name of and through a broker or nominee, who wish to vote at the meeting will need to obtain a proxy form from the institution that holds their shares.

Internet voting.

You may also grant a proxy to vote your shares by means of the Internet. The Internet voting procedures below are designed to authenticate your identity, to allow you to grant a proxy to vote your shares, and to confirm that your instructions have been recorded properly.

For shares registered in your name.

As a shareholder of record, you may go to <http://www.proxyvote.com> to grant a proxy to vote your shares by means of the Internet. You will be required to provide our number and the control number, both of which are contained on your proxy card. You will then be asked to complete an electronic proxy card. The votes represented by such proxy will be generated on the computer screen, and you will be prompted to submit or revise them as desired.

For shares registered in the name of a broker or bank.

Most beneficial owners, whose stock is held in *street name*, receive instructions for granting proxies from their banks, brokers or other agents, rather than a proxy card. If your shares are held in a stock brokerage account or by a bank or other nominee, you are considered the beneficial owner of shares held in *street name*, and these proxy materials are being forwarded to you by your broker or nominee who is considered, with respect to those shares, the shareholder of record. As the beneficial owner, you have the right to direct your broker on how to vote. Your broker or nominee has enclosed a voting instruction card for you to use in directing your broker or nominee as to how to vote your shares.

A number of brokers and banks are participating in a program provided through ADP Investor Communication Services that offers the means to grant proxies to vote shares over the telephone and Internet. If your shares are held in an account with a broker or bank participating in the ADP Investor Communication Services program, you may grant a proxy to vote those shares by calling the telephone number shown on the instruction form received from your broker or bank, or via the Internet at ADP Investor Communication Services Web site at <http://www.bsg.adp.com>.

General information for all shares voted via the Internet.

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We must receive votes submitted via the Internet by 11:59 p.m. on April 18, 2007. Submitting your proxy via the Internet will not affect your right to vote in person should you decide to attend the annual meeting.

Can I change my vote after I return my proxy card?

Yes. You may revoke your proxy and change your vote at any time before the proxy is exercised by filing with Columbia's Secretary either a notice of revocation or another signed proxy bearing a later date. The powers of the proxy holders will be suspended if you attend the meeting in person and so request, although attendance at the meeting will not by itself revoke a previously granted proxy.

What are the Board's recommendations?

Unless you give other instructions on your proxy card, Mr. Weyerhaeuser and Ms. Dressel, as the persons named as proxy holders on the proxy card, will vote as recommended by the Board of Directors. The Board recommends a vote FOR the election of the nominated directors listed in this Proxy Statement.

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If any other matters are considered at the meeting, Mr. Weyerhaeuser and Ms. Dressel will vote as recommended by the Board of Directors. If the Board does not give a recommendation, Mr. Weyerhaeuser and Ms. Dressel will have discretion to vote as they think best.

Will my shares be voted if I do not sign and return my proxy card?

If your shares are registered in your name and you do not return your proxy card or do not vote in person at the Annual Meeting, your shares will not be voted.

If your shares are held in street name and you do not submit voting instructions to your broker, your broker may vote your shares at this meeting on the election of directors only.

How many votes are needed to hold the Annual Meeting?

A majority of Columbia's outstanding shares as of the Record Date (a quorum) must be present at the Annual Meeting in order to hold the meeting and conduct business. Shares are counted as present at the meeting if a shareholder is present and votes in person at the meeting or has properly submitted a proxy card. As of the Record Date for the Annual Meeting, 16,151,962 shares of Columbia common stock were outstanding and eligible to vote. Both abstentions and broker non-votes are counted as present for the purpose of determining the presence of a quorum. Broker non-votes, however, are not counted as shares present and entitled to be voted with respect to the matter on which the broker has expressly not voted. Generally, broker non-votes occur when shares held by a broker for a beneficial owner are not voted with respect to a particular proposal because (1) the broker has not received voting instructions from the beneficial owner and (2) the broker lacks discretionary voting power to vote such shares.

What vote is required to elect directors?

The nine director nominees who receive the highest number of FOR votes will be elected. You may vote FOR all or some of the nominees or WITHHOLD AUTHORITY for all or some of the nominees. Votes that are withheld and broker non-votes will have no effect on the outcome of the election.

Can I vote on other matters?

Columbia has not received timely notice of any shareholder proposals to be considered at the Annual Meeting, and the Board of Directors does not know of any other matters to be brought before the Annual Meeting.

When are proposals for the 2008 Annual Meeting due?

Proposals by shareholders to transact business at Columbia's 2008 Annual Meeting must be delivered to Columbia's Secretary no later than November 19, 2007, in order to be considered for inclusion in Columbia's proxy statement and proxy card and should contain such information as is required under Columbia's Bylaws. Such proposals will need to comply with the SEC's regulations regarding the inclusion of stockholder proposals in Columbia-sponsored proxy materials. In order for a shareholder proposal to be raised from the floor during next year's annual meeting, written notice must be received by Columbia no later than November 19, 2007 and should contain such information as required under Columbia's Bylaws. If we do not receive notice of a shareholder proposal within this timeframe, the persons named as proxies in such proxy statement and form of proxy will use its discretionary authority to vote the shares it represents as the Board may recommend.

How do I nominate someone to be a director?

In order for a shareholder to nominate a director for consideration at an annual meeting, the shareholder must provide a written notice that contains the information required by our Bylaws to the Chairman of the Board,

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c/o Columbia's Corporate Secretary not less than 120 days in advance of the first anniversary of the date our proxy statement was mailed to shareholders for the preceding year's annual meeting. We did not receive any such nominations for directors for the 2007 annual shareholders meeting. For our annual meeting in 2008, we must receive this notice by November 19, 2007. You can obtain a copy of the full text of the bylaw provision by writing to the Corporate Secretary, 1301 A Street, Tacoma, Washington 98402. A copy of our bylaws is posted on our website.

You may contact Columbia's Corporate Secretary for a copy of the detailed procedures regarding the requirements for making shareholder proposals and nominating director candidates.

Table of Contents**STOCK OWNERSHIP***Are there any owners of more than 5% of Columbia's stock?*

As of December 31, 2006, the following shareholder owned more than 5% of the outstanding shares of Columbia common stock:

<u>Name and Address</u>	<u>Number of Shares</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Barclays Global Investors NA 45 Fremont Street, San Francisco, CA 94105	1,101,548	6.86%

How much stock do Columbia's directors and executive officers own?

The following table shows, as of January 5, 2007, the amount of Columbia common stock directly owned (unless otherwise indicated) by (a) each director and director nominee; (b) the executive officers named in the Summary Compensation Table below; and (c) all of Columbia's directors and executive officers as a group. Except as otherwise noted, Columbia believes that the beneficial owners of the shares listed below, based on information furnished by such owners, have or share with a spouse voting and investment power with respect to the shares. Beneficial ownership is determined under the rules of the SEC and includes shares that could be acquired within 60 days through the exercise of an option or other right. All share numbers and prices have been adjusted for applicable stock splits and stock dividends.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Number</u> ⁽¹⁾	<u>Percentage</u> ⁽¹⁾
William T. Weyerhaeuser	Chairman of the Board	223,746 ⁽²⁾	1.4%
Melanie J. Dressel	Director, President and Chief Executive Officer	99,802 ⁽³⁾	*
John P. Folsom	Director	30,658 ⁽⁴⁾	*
Frederick M. Goldberg	Director	13,344 ⁽⁵⁾	*
Thomas M. Hulbert	Director	39,015	*
Thomas L. Matson, Sr.	Director	134,867	*
Andrew L. McDonald	Executive Vice President, Chief Credit Officer	6,314 ⁽⁶⁾	*
Mark W. Nelson	Executive Vice President, Chief Banking Officer	17,904 ⁽⁷⁾	*
Daniel C. Regis	Director	7,500 ⁽⁸⁾	*
Donald H. Rodman	Director	26,260 ⁽⁹⁾	*
Gary R. Schminkey	Executive Vice President, Chief Financial Officer	29,567 ⁽¹⁰⁾	*
James M. Will	Director	23,407	*
Directors and executive officers as a group (12 persons)		652,384	4.1%

* Represents less than 1% of Columbia's outstanding common stock.

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- (1) The number and percentages shown are based on the number of shares of Columbia common stock deemed beneficially held under applicable securities regulations, including options or other rights exercisable on March 1, 2007, 60 days after December 31, 2006 as follows: Ms. Dressel 26,135 shares; Mr. Folsom 4,690 shares; Mr. Hulbert 4,690 shares; Mr. Matson 3,640 shares; Mr. Nelson 10,500 shares; Mr. Rodman 3,640 shares; Mr. Schminkey 8,865 shares; Mr. Weyerhaeuser 2,153 shares; Mr. Will 3,640; and directors and executive officers as a group 67,953 shares.

- (2) 212,249 shares are held indirectly by WBW Trust Number One, for which Mr. Weyerhaeuser is the trustee with sole voting and investment power.

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- (3) Includes 51,134 shares held in Ms. Dressel's Family LLC, 2,408 shares held by a corporation owned by Ms. Dressel and her spouse, 5,622 shares held in Ms. Dressel's 401(k) and 20 shares held by Ms. Dressel's children.
- (4) Includes 8,550 shares held indirectly in Mr. Folsom's IRA and 950 shares held in Mrs. Folsom's IRA.
- (5) Includes 2,801 shares held by a partnership for the equal benefit of Mr. Goldberg and his mother over which Mr. Goldberg exercises investment power and 1,793 shares held in Mr. Goldberg's IRA.
- (6) Includes 915 shares held in Mr. McDonald's 401(k).
- (7) Includes 707 shares held in Mr. Nelson's 401(k).
- (8) Includes 6,750 shares held by the Regis Family Trust.
- (9) Includes 5,675 shares held in Mrs. Rodman's IRA, 5,625 shares held in Mr. Rodman's IRA, 4,267 shares held in a Living Trust for the benefit of the Rodman estate.
- (10) Includes 7,615 shares held in Mr. Schminkey's 401(k).

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE DIRECTORS AND NOMINEES

How many directors are nominated?

Columbia's Bylaws provide that the number of directors to be elected by the shareholders will be at least five and not more than 25. Under the Bylaws, the Board has authority to decide the exact number of directors to be elected within these limits. The Bylaws further provide that up to two directors may be added by the Board between annual meetings of the shareholders. No new directors have been nominated since the 2006 Annual meeting. Columbia's Board has fixed the number of directors to be elected at the Annual Meeting at nine and has nominated the persons listed on the following pages for election as directors to serve until the 2007 Annual Meeting or until their successors are elected.

What is the retirement age for directors?

Columbia's Bylaws provide that any person who has attained the age of 75 prior to the next meeting of shareholders may not stand for election.

What happens if a nominee refuses or is unable to stand for election?

The Board may reduce the number of seats on the Board or designate a replacement nominee. If the Board designates a substitute, shares represented by proxy will be voted FOR the substitute nominee. The Board presently has no knowledge that any of the nominees will refuse or be unable to serve.

PROPOSAL: ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

Information regarding each of the nominees is provided below, including each nominee's name, age at March 1, 2007, principal occupation during the past five years, and the year first elected a director of Columbia, its predecessor corporation or one of its former or current subsidiaries. All of the nominees are presently directors of Columbia and Columbia Bank, and certain of the directors also serve on the Board of Bank of Astoria.

Melanie J. Dressel

Director since 1998

Ms. Dressel, 54, was named Chief Executive Officer of Columbia in February 2003 and continues to serve as the Company's President. From January 2000 prior to her appointment, Ms. Dressel was the President and Chief Operating Officer of Columbia, having served prior to that time and since May 1997 as Executive Vice President. She has also served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Columbia Bank since January 2000, having served prior to that time and since July 1998 as President and Chief Operating Officer, and from May 1997 to July 1998, as Executive Vice President. Ms. Dressel, who has over 30 years of banking experience, joined Columbia Bank in 1993, serving as Senior Vice President and Private Banking Manager until May 1997. Ms. Dressel also serves on the Board of Bank of Astoria.

John P. Folsom

Director since 1997

Mr. Folsom, 62, served as the president of Brown & Brown, Inc. of Washington, formerly Raleigh, Schwarz & Powell (insurance brokers and consulting), Tacoma, Washington, from 1989 through December 31, 2006.

Frederick M. Goldberg

Director since 2003

Mr. Goldberg, 67, has been a shareholder of SaltChuk Resources, Inc., Seattle, Washington, since 1982 and is currently a member of the Executive Committee and chairman of the Audit Committee of that company. Mr. Goldberg has been a managing partner of Goldberg Investments since 1986. Mr. Goldberg has also been chairman of the board of Panorama City, Lacey, Washington, since 1990 and Gibbons Lane Vineyard, Tenino, Washington, since 1997.

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Thomas M. Hulbert

Director since 1999

Mr. Hulbert, 60, has been the president and chief executive officer of Winsor Corporation (lighting technologies), Olympia, Washington, since 1996 and the president and chief executive officer of Hulco, Inc. (real estate investments), Olympia, Washington, since 1984.

Thomas L. Matson, Sr.

Director since 1998

Mr. Matson, 69, has been the Chairman of Tom Matson Dodge, Inc. (automobile dealership), Auburn, Washington, since 1963. Mr. Matson served as the chairman of Cascade Bancorp, Inc. and its subsidiary, Cascade Community Bank, Auburn, Washington, from 1990 to 1997, when those institutions were acquired by Columbia.

Daniel C. Regis

Director since 2003

Mr. Regis, 67, has been part owner and managing director of Digital Partners, LLC, Kirkland, Washington since January 2000. He is currently a director of two other public companies; Cray, Inc. and Art Technology Group. Mr. Regis was president and a managing partner of Kirlan Venture Capital, a Seattle based company, from June 1996 until June 1999. Mr. Regis was a certified public accountant and a partner at Price Waterhouse from 1964 until 1996.

Donald H. Rodman

Director since 1991

Mr. Rodman, 68, has been the owner and the Vice President of Rodman Realty, Longview, Washington, since 1961. Mr. Rodman also serves on the Board of Bank of Astoria.

William T. Weyerhaeuser

Director since 1998

Mr. Weyerhaeuser, 63, is the Chairman of the Board of Columbia. He is a clinical psychologist who retired from private practice in Tacoma, Washington in 1998. Mr. Weyerhaeuser is currently the chairman of the board of EDEN Bioscience Corporation and Vice Chairman of Potlatch Corporation (forest products), each of which has a class of securities registered pursuant to Section 12(b) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934. From 1984 to July 2000, Mr. Weyerhaeuser was also the owner and chairman of the board of Comerco, Inc. (holding company for the Yelm Telephone Company), Tacoma, Washington.

James M. Will

Director since 1993

Mr. Will, 60, serves as the president of Titus-Will Enterprises (automobile dealerships and property management), Tacoma, Washington and also as president of that company's subsidiary, Titus-Will Chevrolet, Cadillac & Hyundai, Olympia, Washington. Prior to that time and since 1969, Mr. Will was the president of Tam Engineering Corp. (automotive engine re-manufacturing), Tacoma, Washington.

The Board of Directors unanimously recommends a vote FOR the nominees for director.

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CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Guidelines

The Board of Directors is committed to good business practices, transparency in financial reporting and the highest level of corporate governance. Columbia operates within a comprehensive plan of corporate governance for the purpose of defining responsibilities, setting high standards of professional and personal conduct and assuring compliance with such responsibilities and standards. We regularly monitor developments in the area of corporate governance and our corporate governance policies, practices and committee charters are reviewed periodically and updated as necessary to reflect changes in regulatory requirements and evolving oversight practices.

Code of Ethics

The Company adopted a Code of Ethics for Senior Financial Officers, which applies to its principal executive officer, principal financial officer, principal accounting officer or controller, and any persons performing similar functions.

You can access our current charters, including our Code of Ethics, Audit Committee, Corporate Governance and Nominating Committee and Personnel/Compensation Committee charters, Corporate Governance Policy, Code of Conduct and our Bylaws in the Corporate Governance section of our website at www.columbiabank.com, or by writing to: Columbia Banking System, Inc., Attention: Corporate Secretary, 1301 A Street, Tacoma, Washington, 98402-4200.

Director Independence

The Board has analyzed the independence of each director and nominee and has determined that the following members of the Board meet the applicable laws and listing standards regarding independence required by Nasdaq and that each such director is free of relationships that would interfere with the individual exercise of independent judgment. In determining the independence of each director, the Board considered many factors, including any lending with the directors, each of which were made on the same terms as comparable transactions made with other persons. Such arrangements are discussed in detail in the section entitled *Interest of Management in Certain Transactions*.

Based on these standards, the Board determined that each of the following non-employee directors is independent and has no relationship with the Company, except as a director and shareholder:

John P. Folsom
Frederick M. Goldberg
Thomas M. Hulbert
Thomas L. Matson, Sr.

Daniel C. Regis
Donald H. Rodman
William T. Weyerhaeuser
James M. Will

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In addition, based on such standards, the Board determined that Melanie J. Dressel, who serves as the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Company, is not independent because she is an executive officer of the Company.

Shareholder Communications with the Board of Directors

Shareholders and other interested parties may communicate with the Board by writing to the Chairman of the Board c/o Columbia's Corporate Secretary, Columbia Banking System, Inc., 1301 A Street, Tacoma, Washington, 98402-4200. These communications will be reviewed by Columbia's Corporate Secretary and if they are relevant to, and consistent with, the Company's operations and policies, they will be forwarded to the Chairman of the Board.

Table of Contents**BOARD STRUCTURE AND COMPENSATION*****How often did the Board of Directors meet during 2006?***

The Board met 11 times during 2006. Each director attended at least 75% of the total number of meetings of the Board and committees on which he or she served. Columbia directors are expected to attend annual shareholder meetings. Last year, all of our directors attended the annual shareholder meeting. During 2006, the independent directors held four meetings.

What committees has the Board established?

The Board of Directors has established, among others, an Audit Committee, Personnel and Compensation Committee, and a Corporate Governance and Nominating Committee.

The following table shows the membership of the various committees during the year 2006.

Committee Membership

<u>Name</u>	<u>Audit</u>	<u>Compensation</u>	<u>Nominating</u>
John P. Folsom	þ*	..	þ
Frederick M. Goldberg	..	þ	..
Thomas M. Hulbert	þ	þ*	þ
Thomas L. Matson, Sr.	..	þ	þ
Daniel C. Regis	þ
Donald H. Rodman	..	þ	..
William T. Weyerhaeuser	þ*
James M. Will	þ

*Committee Chair

Audit Committee. The Audit Committee is comprised of four directors, each of whom are considered independent as defined by the Nasdaq listing standards. The Audit Committee operates under a formal written charter. Mr. Regis has been identified as the qualified Audit Committee Financial Expert as required by SEC guidelines under the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002. The committee held 8 meetings during the year.

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The Audit Committee is responsible for the oversight of the quality and integrity of Columbia's financial statements, its compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, the qualifications and independence of its independent auditors, the performance of its internal audit function and independent auditors and other significant financial matters. In discharging its duties, the Audit Committee is expected to, among other things:

have the sole authority to appoint, retain, compensate, oversee, evaluate and replace the independent auditors;

review and approve the engagement of the independent auditors to perform audit and non-audit services and related fees;

meet independently with the internal auditing department, independent auditors and senior management;

review the integrity of the financial reporting process;

review the financial reports and disclosures submitted to appropriate regulatory authorities;

maintain procedures for the receipt, retention and treatment of complaints regarding financial matters; and

review and approve related party transactions.

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Personnel and Compensation Committee. The Personnel and Compensation Committee is comprised of four directors, each of whom are considered independent as defined by the Nasdaq listing standards and operates under a formal charter. The Personnel and Compensation Committee is charged with the responsibility of reviewing the performance of Columbia's Chief Executive Officer and other key employees and determines, approves and reports to the Board on the elements of their compensation and long-term equity based incentives. In 2005, the Committee independently retained a compensation consultant, Watson Wyatt Company, to assist the Committee in its deliberations regarding executive compensation. The mandate of the consultant was to serve the Company and work for the Committee in its review of executive compensation practices, including designing an overall executive compensat