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THE ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON CITIES MAGAZINE

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CITYVISION MAGAZINE VOL. 10 / NO. 3

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Trust is earned. It defines our character and our core values. Trust can determine how we approach life and how we measure up to the many challenges we face every day. Trust can take a long time to build but only seconds to lose.

City and town government is the closest government to our citizens. They may see members of their Congressional delegation or county representatives only once or twice, but our citizens see us at the post office, at the grocery store, out walking the dog, or at high school sporting events. They never hesitate to ask questions or tell us what is on their minds. How we respond matters; even if they disagree, they will respect us more if we always tell them the truth. If we do not know the answers to their questions, we can offer to get back to them when we do. Nothing is more valuable than your word.

We live in a crazy political time when trust is more important than ever. We cannot lead without trust. As community leaders, we must always be truthful, even when the truth hurts or is not to our liking. We are all human and make mistakes, and a wrong decision can destroy our

communities' trust in all types of government organizations, so it is best to immediately acknowledge the error and move on. Let your citizens know before you are "drawn and quartered on Facebook!"

At a time when so many people no longer trust government, we as local leaders must work extra hard to earn that trust back. Just remember the basics: do what you say you are going to do, honor your promises, be truthful, immediately admit mistakes, always be on time (the meeting starts at 7:00, so do not wander in 15 minutes late every time), and be consistent and reliable. Your citizens will know that you can be counted on, and their trust in you will grow.

Sincerely,

Patricia Johnson
Mayor, Buckley

Cityvision

5/6.18

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Trust develops in myriad ways: through political activism, apolitical conversations, and Lego construction sessions. And in our popular **NOTED** feature, we navigate new avenues in automatic voter registration.

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Tumwater Mayor Pete Kmet chats about reinforcing community roots.

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A RIGHT TO BE HEARD

In the face of contentious rhetoric and tragic violence, Burien doubles down on identifying and providing the services its community needs.

BY TED KATAUSKAS

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Expert perspectives on the Washington Voting Rights Act, bipartisan politics, and city social media skills. And Sequim cleans up with an AWC Municipal Excellence Award.

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Communities thrive when they embrace differences rather than fear.

A child plays on a rooster statue outside a popular Mexican restaurant in Burien.

A RIGHT TO BE HEARD, P. 14



Dive into safety and the power of pooling!



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Citybeat



Living Social

A Snohomish group pursues its “likes” offline.

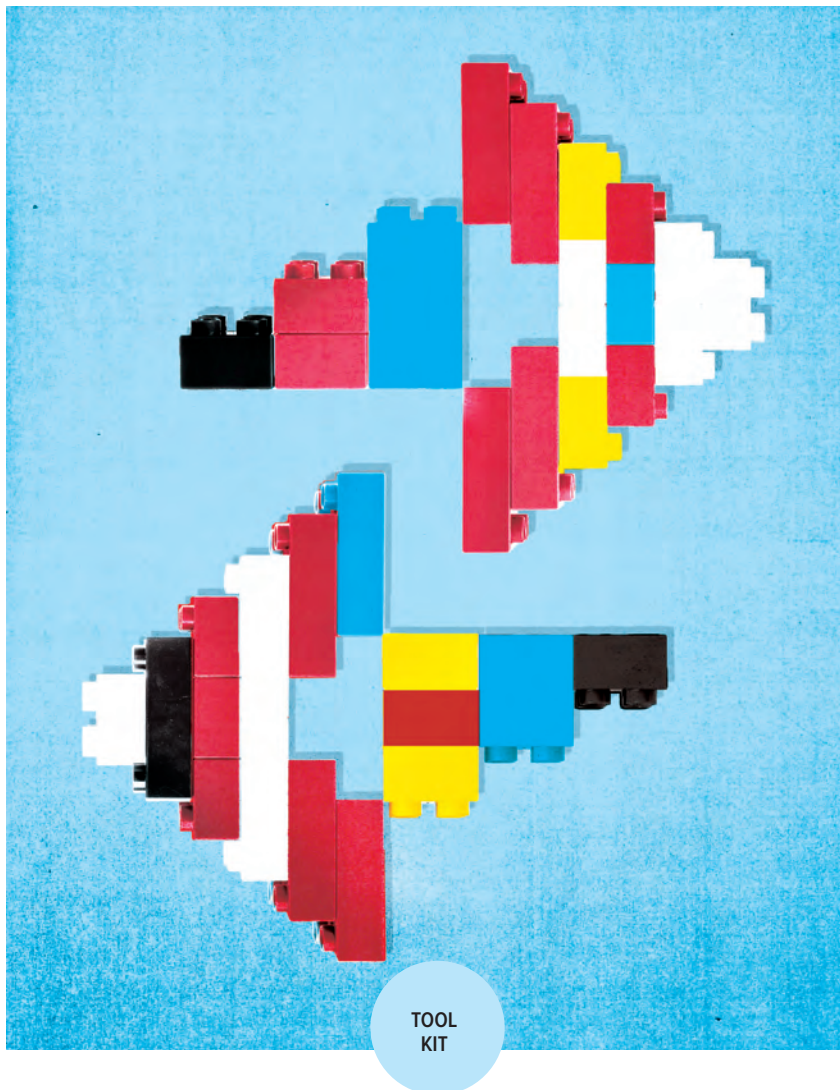
IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN a more peculiar table of four seated inside Fred's Rivertown Alehouse, nestled in the heart of Snohomish's bustling downtown antiques district, early this past October. Of the small group gathered, most were active voices in the upcoming elections polarizing their small city of 10,000, and not all had come from the same side of the issue. Still, what could have become a heated confrontation turned into a conversation as warm as the unseasonable fall night. It was official: the Snohomish Building Bridges Social Club had been born.

“Our community was being divided,” says member Linda Redmon, referencing the voter-approved shift from

a council-manager to a strong mayor form of government, which had become a contentious topic in Snohomish's virtual commons. “We saw a lot of people living inside the echo chamber of social media instead of meeting face-to-face.” Redmon thought that if community members could get to know one another outside of the online sphere, they would see that they were more alike than different.

For fellow club member Tom Merrill, being able to converse offline with those who may have differing persuasions was a big part of the group's appeal. “We've so fractionalized our society that **CONTINUED ON P.10** ▶

NOTED ▶ AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION ACT **THE QUESTION** ▶ HOW DOES LISTENING BUILD TRUST? **TRAINING** ▶ MUNICIPAL BUDGETING, ZOMBIE HOMES, AND MORE



Block Chain

A Lego lending program clicks in Pullman.

BY RACHEL SANDSTROM MORRISON

PLAYING WITH LEGOS can help children develop spatial, social, fine motor, and problem-solving skills they need to excel in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM), but for many kids the toy building blocks are inaccessible. They can be expensive, and many parents and schools cannot afford to supply them for students. In Pullman, the community rallied together to provide a sort of “Lego lending” program for all children by donating the toys to, naturally, the local library.

“It happened so fast. In 2015, we had the idea to bring Legos into the library,” says Youth Services Librarian Kathleen Ahern. “The community responded fast—donating Legos in tubs, bags, boxes, and cash (to purchase additional Legos). It’s become a valuable resource for the community.”

When Ahern and her colleagues wrote the grant proposal to the Pullman Education Foundation and received \$300 from the Pullman Library budget (plus \$300 in matching donations from the Friends of the Library), “The original goal was to

buy Legos and have them at the library every month,” Ahern says. “We wanted to create a space for non-instructional, free exploration for the kids.” Once word got out about Legos in the Library, however, people donated in droves, making it

“LIBRARIES ARE EVOLVING INTO COMMUNITY CENTERS, AND PROVIDING THESE KINDS OF RESOURCES CAN BRING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER.”

clear to Ahern and the Pullman Library that the need and opportunity were well beyond the scope they had projected.

Now, Legos are an item available for checkout from the library, just like books or videos. “We put Legos in tubs with a book and a flat sheet for easy cleanup,” says Ahern. “This way, kids can play with them in the library or take them home to play.” The library has received multiple notes from parents and children thanking them for providing these toys. And it continues to receive donations—rather than collecting dust on a grown child’s bedroom shelf or in the attic awaiting a grandchild’s annual visit, Pullman’s Legos are fueling creativity year-round.

What’s more, Ahern sees the program as a natural fit for libraries anywhere. “Libraries are evolving into community centers,” she says, “and providing these kinds of resources can bring the community together.”

Pullman’s success with Legos in the Library demonstrates how a modest \$600 grant proposal, based on a germ of an idea, can have a profound impact. “It’s been a successful, lovely community effort all around: it met the original intent, and then the community responded and spurred it on,” Ahern says. “We filled a need we didn’t even know we had.” **C**

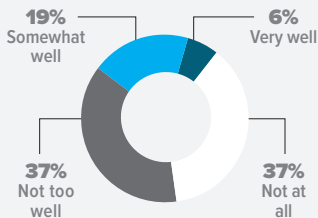
MIND THE GAP

Americans weigh in nationally on democratic values versus reality. How is the country living its values?

61%

Say the tone of respectful political debate is very important

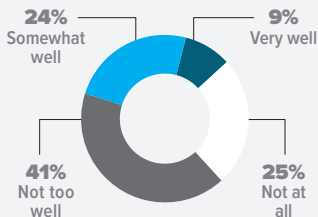
Do people hear respect now?



60%

Say it's important that people agree on basic facts even if they disagree on politics

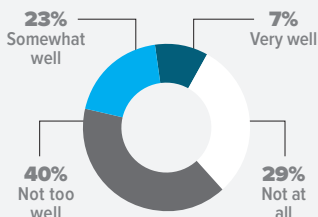
Are people agreeing on basic facts?



74%

Say it's important that government be open and transparent

How is government doing with openness?



Source: Pew Research Center, Trusts Facts and Democracy (April 2018)



SISTERS ACT

A grassroots group helps drive change in White Salmon and beyond.

BY RACHEL SANDSTROM MORRISON



LIKE MANY FORMER elementary school teachers, Kirsten Dennis describes herself as a “doer.” “It’s in my nature,” she says. “I handle stress by taking action.

After the 2016 presidential election, Dennis did just that: she invited women to her Columbia Gorge–area home in White Salmon and worked with them on lists of action items to address their concerns. Across town, fellow resident Michelle “Mike” Mayfield was acting on a similar impulse.

“I kept talking to people, and everyone was so upset,” Mayfield recalls. “I knew we needed to come together as a community of women. So I invited women to have a meal, connect, and talk.” A woman in attendance at Mayfield’s dinner who knew Dennis soon connected the two, and by December a group of nearly 100 women gathered in a Hood River tasting room, formed work groups on topics like local government and community outreach, and christened the upstart Columbia Gorge Women’s Action Network (CGWAN), with Mayfield and Dennis as cofounders.

“WE NEEDED TO COME TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY OF WOMEN. SO I INVITED WOMEN TO HAVE A MEAL, CONNECT, AND TALK.”

“The energy in the room of that first meeting was palpable,” Dennis says. “It was crazy exciting to have a room full of women who were ready to get stuff done.”

Not even two years later, CGWAN has grown to more than 2,200 members in two states. The group continues to hold general and committee meetings on a monthly basis, and its actions have produced tangible local results, such as helping four women, all new to running for office, earn seats on the White Salmon city council.

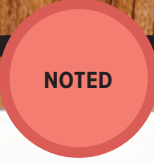
In addition to those electoral successes, CGWAN gives its members the tools to take action on a smaller scale. For instance, says Dennis, “We publish a weekly action alert that goes out to 700. It’s kind of a weekly to-do list, including calls you can make, meetings you can attend, issues to focus on—it keeps people informed.”

One of the main reasons for the continued success of CGWAN, according to Dennis and Mayfield, is group leadership. “We have a leadership team of six women, and everyone is dedicated and takes their responsibility seriously,” says Dennis. They also emphasize the importance of targeting the group’s efforts. “There are a lot of worthy causes out there to support,” Dennis adds, “but having a defined mission makes it easier to say no to causes you can’t give the time they deserve.”

In the immediate future, Dennis and Mayfield are focused on the midterm elections. “We are all hands on deck for these primaries right now,” Mayfield says. “But we identify new goals as we go. We could have a lot of work to do in the coming years, but our mission to build a supportive network of women activists, amplify the power of women’s voices, and channel our collective energies into meaningful action keeps us focused.”



For more information:
cgwan.org



AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION ACT

CHAPTER 110, LAWS OF 2018

[...] **NEW SECTION. Sec. 2.** (1) The legislature finds that: (a) The right to vote is enshrined as one of the greatest virtues of our democracy and that an engaged citizenry is essential at each level of government to ensure that **all voices are heard** [...]

PART I

[...] **NEW SECTION. Sec. 102.** A new section is added to chapter 29A.08 RCW to read as follows:

The department of licensing shall implement an automatic voter registration system so that a person age eighteen years or older who meets requirements for voter registration and **has received** or is renewing an enhanced driver's license or identocard issued under RCW 46.20.202 or is changing the address for an existing enhanced driver's license or identocard pursuant to RCW 46.20.205 may be registered to vote or update voter registration information at the time of registration, renewal, or change of address, **by automated process** if the department of licensing record associated with the applicant contains the data required to determine whether the applicant meets requirements for voter registration under RCW 29A.08.010, other information as required by the secretary of state, and includes a signature image. **The person must be informed that his or her record will be used for voter registration and offered an opportunity to decline to register.** [...]

[...] **NEW SECTION. Sec. 104.** A new section is added to chapter 29A.08 RCW to read as follows:

(3) If the prospective registration applicant declines to register to vote or the information provided by the department of licensing does not indicate citizenship, the information must not be included on the list of registered voters. [...]

PART II

[...] **NEW SECTION. Sec. 201.** A new section is added to chapter 29A.04 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Beginning July 1, 2019, the health benefit exchange shall provide the following information to the secretary of state's office for consenting Washington healthplanfinder applicants who affirmatively indicate that they are interested in registering to vote, including applicants who file changes of address, **who reside in Washington, are age eighteen years or older, and are verified citizens, for voter registration purposes** [...]

[...] **NEW SECTION. Sec. 202.** A new section is added to chapter 29A.08 RCW to read as follows:

(1) **The governor shall make a decision, in consultation with the office of the secretary of state, as to whether [...] [other] agenc[ies] [...] shall implement automatic voter registration.** The final decision is at the governor's sole discretion. [...]

Oregon was the first to pass an AVR law in 2015. After Oregon's AVR implementation, youth voter turnout increased by 6%, and person-of-color voter turnout increased by 26%.

The new law not only registers new applicants but will automatically register all existing license or ID holders who are not already registered to vote.

Although applicants previously had the option of registering to vote at the same time as these procedures, the process was not automatic. Now, instead of having to opt in, they will be registered to vote unless they opt out.

The new law does not change the eligibility requirements to vote. The applicant must be 18 years old, a resident of Washington, and a US citizen. Nearly 20% of eligible voters in Washington are not registered to vote.

Washington joins 11 other states and the District of Columbia in passing an automatic voter registration (AVR) law.

In Oregon's next general election after passing AVR, nearly 100,000 voters out of the 225,000 who were automatically registered cast a ballot. That's a voter turnout rate of 43% for what were, previously, nonvoters.

"If a Washington State resident is providing proof of citizenship as part of a transaction with the state, why wouldn't we register them to vote?"
-Secretary of State Kim Wyman

Washington joined four other states in applying AVR reform to public assistance agencies in addition to the department of licensing.



THE QUESTION

HOW DOES LISTENING BUILD TRUST?



A good listener focuses on the speaker, with no distractions such as looking at cell phones. The listener should be able to approach the speaker with a question or comment regarding their speech topic. This shows an interest and possibly leads to a follow-up discussion. Listening is also a great customer service tool: when you receive inquiries and respond quickly, it builds trust and shows that you care.

—MICKI HARNOIS
Councilmember, Rockford



Listening is a powerful skill that allows us to gain valuable insight into the needs and perspectives of community members. When you use this information to help make informed decisions on city matters, it demonstrates to the community that their feedback is valued. I find one-on-one meetings to be the most worthwhile approach to actively listening and giving people my full attention.

—NEIL JOHNSON
Mayor, Bonney Lake



Stephen R. Covey argued in his book *The Speed of Trust* that trust is a key leadership competency. To achieve trust, we must listen—with our ears, with our eyes, and with our hearts. Formulating a response while the other person is still speaking is not listening. Active, engaged listening leads to informed dialogue that can build genuine understanding and provide the foundation for effective decision-making.

—KENT KEEL
Mayor, University Place

TRAININGS

JUNE

6 **RMSA Anti-Harassment**
Algona

26 **Strategic Sourcing Summit with US Communities**
Yakima

26–29 **AWC Annual Conference**
Yakima

JULY

26–27 **Municipal Budgeting & Financial Management**
Tukwila

AUG

23–24 **Municipal Budgeting & Financial Management**
Leavenworth

TRAINING HIGHLIGHTS

NEW TOOLS TO ADDRESS ZOMBIE HOMES
WEBINAR RECORDING

Abandoned homes (also known as zombie homes) have a number of negative implications for cities including crime, public safety issues, lower property values, lack of community cohesion, and lower tax revenue, to name a few. AWC has been working to enhance the tools and processes available to cities to address foreclosed or abandoned nuisance homes with and without bank cooperation. This webinar explores existing and new options for cities to address the impacts these properties have on their communities.

- Learn about the new zombie home law (HB 2057/SB 5797) taking effect this June
- Discover what tools are available to help cities address abandoned or foreclosed homes
- Hear how the bill allows cities to better recover costs for conducting nuisance abatements on homes that are mid-foreclosure

wacities.org/events-education/elearning

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A local government's budget document is important. More than just a bunch of numbers, the budget document is your primary tool for prioritizing and addressing your community's needs. It's also a valuable way to communicate with your residents. The budget shows residents expected community investments, and they can see how funds are divided among services like public safety, parks and recreation, environmental protection, transportation, economic development, libraries, community centers, human services, and more.

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- Learn to weave performance measures into the budget document
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Citybeat

Living Social *continued from page 5*

we don't have common bumping places anymore to run into each other and chat with people that come from a different philosophical base," he says—even as the fledgling Snohomish Building Bridges Social Club was beginning to create just that.

Each member from that first meeting at Fred's was tasked with introducing two to three people from their personal networks to the group, which has since grown to about 12 regular members who adhere to one crucial rule at their monthly

“SINCE WE DON'T TALK ABOUT POLITICS, IT'S INTERESTING TO SEE HOW WELL WE WORK TOGETHER AND ACTUALLY TRULY ENJOY EACH OTHER.”

meetings: “We can't talk politics,” says Merrill. Instead, this partisanship-free social zone has hosted everything from an informational civics session to a neighborhood garden cleanup, all while working to help people come to understand others who may think differently than they do. “If you take your differences off the table,” says Merrill, “all you can do is talk about what you have in common.”

And it seems connections of commonalities are being forged. “The bridge-building we thought we were going to go out and create in our community has been happening in our very own group,” says member Bill Rockwell. “We've been taking the baby step of observing how we interact with our different views—and the emotions associated with that—and being cognizant of those dynamics.” Group member Meg Gray agrees: “Since we don't talk about politics, it's interesting to see how well we work together and actually truly enjoy each other.”

Of course, there's more work to do. This summer, the club hopes to host a series of block parties to encourage a broader sense of community involvement, and in July club members will hit their respective neighborhoods to collect food for the local food bank while also connecting with neighbors. “The whole thing is to get people out from behind their computer screens and meeting face-to-face,” says member Lya Badgley.

In other words, it doesn't really matter how many cans their food drive collects (although every little bit helps fight hunger). For the Snohomish Building Bridges Social Club, success is measured in more intangible ways. “If I can find one person from the other side, and we can sit and chat and drink beer and laugh about our differences,” says Merrill, “I will feel like we've been successful.”

—Tracy Howard Garton



Cityscope



Green Thumb

Tumwater Mayor Pete Kmet chats about reinforcing community roots and helping cultivate the next generation of citizens.



Tumwater Mayor
Pete Kmet at
Fresh Farm

What brought you to Tumwater?

I came out here originally 30 years ago to work for the Department of Ecology. We were looking for homes in the greater Olympia area, stumbled onto a beautiful home on lower Tumwater Hill, and have been there ever since.

What's your favorite thing about calling Tumwater home?

It just feels like home. You talk to folks. Even though it's a fairly good-size city, it still feels like a small town.

What made you want to represent your city first as a councilmember, then as mayor?

I started serving on city council in 1991. I became involved because it had been a period of fast growth in Tumwater, and I became concerned with the way the city was responding. I thought I could do a better job, so myself and my neighbors ran for office, and we won. I've been there ever since.

CONTINUED ▶



What changes have you seen since first taking office?

The brewery closed, and we're still dealing with the legacy of that. A lot of state offices have relocated here. We've seen a lot of residential growth, and growth in the physical area of Tumwater, since annexing some areas adjacent to the original city boundaries. Our population when I first came here was 8,500, and now it's three times that.

You mentioned the Old Brewhouse, which the city took ownership of in 2016—what's your dream for the building?

The Brewhouse is part of a national historic district and is representative of early industry and industrial architecture of the state of Washington, so it really is an iconic structure. We've been lucky to have had a group of local volunteers and businesses step up to volunteer time, materials, and expertise to put some temporary roofs on while we secure other funds to do a more permanent preservation project. Our vision would be to have a restaurant in there on the main floor, or perhaps a museum. We're working with local Native American folks to have some displays relating to their history in the area, too.

Speaking of community involvement, what are some other ways you encourage locals to stay connected?

We've really expanded our volunteer programs—people plant trees, install smoke detectors, clean up our parks, do a number of different things in the area—and in



“IN SOME AREAS OF THE CITY, I’LL GO BACK, AND THEY’LL REMEMBER THAT I KNOCKED ON THEIR DOOR OVER 20 YEARS AGO. IT’S A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES.”

the winter we host Tumwater University, which invites community members in to learn more details about how the city works. On Friday evenings in August, we host Screen on the Green, where we show movies outside for families to come down and watch. I think it's something kids will remember about growing up in Tumwater.

Do they ever trust you to pick the movies?

Ha ha, they don't. That's something our park staff does.

If they were to let you pick, what would you show?

Oh, probably one of the *Star Wars* movies or *Star Trek*. That's my hobby, if anything, learning about space and reading about some of the early days of the space program.

You knocked on 2,000 doors while campaigning

for reelection—how does that reinforce community connections?

Every time I've run, I've made it a point to knock on doors and talk with folks. In some areas of the city, I'll go back, and they'll remember that I knocked on their door over 20 years ago. It's a unique opportunity to hear different perspectives that you wouldn't get otherwise.

Did anyone invite you in for dinner?

I certainly have been invited in for a water or a snack, but dinner? It hasn't quite risen to that level yet.

What's been your proudest moment as mayor?

I'd probably say the Fresh Farm program. We had a few unused acres of land, complete with an old barn, on a farm the city had purchased over 20 years ago. Garden-Raised Bounty (GRuB) had a cool program they operated with the Olympia school district, and they said we should talk with the Tumwater district about something similar. We fixed up the barn, the kids grow vegetables, and we pay a stipend. These are kids whose families are struggling, so they get to take vegetables home. Some of the vegetables go to our senior center, some end up in our school district to help in the kitchen, and this past summer the students set up a small farm stand, so they got a little business experience, as well. We had one of the young gentlemen come back recently—he said he's going to graduate this year and probably wouldn't have finished high school if he hadn't had this program. That's the kind of stuff that's tremendously rewarding.

Tumwater

Cityvision looks at how Tumwater fosters an active community environment.

POPULATION

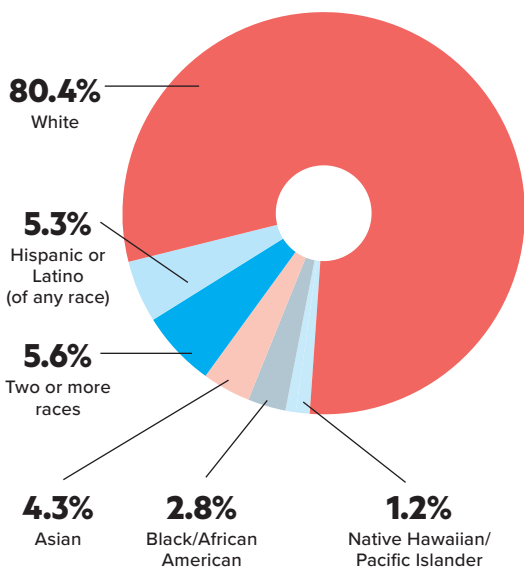
POPULATION DATA FROM THE 2010 US CENSUS, UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED

2010 **17,371** 

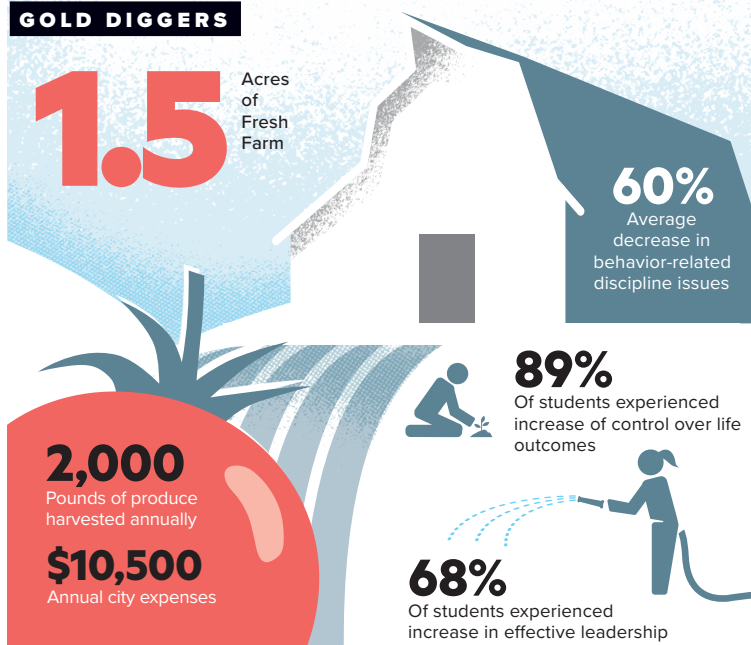
2017 **23,210** 

2017 SOURCE: WA OFM

DEMOGRAPHICS



GOLD DIGGERS



STUDENT OUTCOMES BASED ON 2017 FRESH FARM SUMMER PROGRAM

TIME SHARERS

13,613

Volunteer hours tracked in 2017 by half-time, city-funded volunteer coordinator



- 8,061** Hours to Parks and Recreation
- 3,648** Hours to Tumwater Valley Golf Course
- 534** Hours to Stream Team
- 500** Hours to Fire Department
- 269** Hours to Police
- 601** Hours to Events & Adopt-a-Road

ADULT LEARNERS



MATCH MAKERS



SOURCE: CITY OF TUMWATER

A RIGHT TO BE HEARD

IN THE FACE OF CONTENTIOUS RHETORIC AND TRAGIC VIOLENCE, BURIEN DOUBLES DOWN ON IDENTIFYING AND PROVIDING THE SERVICES ITS COMMUNITY NEEDS.

By TED KATAUSKAS / Photographs by MIKE KANE

ON JANUARY 9, 2017, following one of the most divisive national elections in US history, the City of Burien adopted Ordinance 651, which prohibits its law enforcement personnel and city staff from asking or collecting information about anyone's immigration status or religious affiliation. It didn't matter that Burien's police services provider, the King County Sheriff's Office, had already had a "don't ask, don't tell" policy about immigration status in place since 1992; as a service provider itself, the 25-year-old city was responding to concerns from local immigration rights activists. In this South Sound community of 51,000, where 23 percent of the population is foreign born and which famously boasts more *quinceañera* shops than Starbucks franchises, the activists wanted proof positive that the City of Burien had their backs amid the uncertainty sown by an immigrant-unfriendly White House administration that had rallied campaign crowds with a promise of mass deportations and chants of "Build that wall!"

"The media had labeled our city a 'sanctuary city,' but from a policy standpoint, Ordinance 651 doesn't change how our police will be acting: our officers have never asked about immigration status," says Emily Inlow-Hood, Burien's communications officer. "But what it does do is extend that policy to all city staff, and it codified that we will never ask about immigration status."

Aside from building trust within a sizable—and growing—constituency (since 2010, Burien's Latino population has more than doubled to 24 percent, while its white population has contracted from 76 percent to 64 percent), Ordinance 651 also addressed public safety concerns: residents worried about divulging their immigration status might be less likely to report crimes. For a city that the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* ranked behind Tukwila, Seattle, SeaTac, and Auburn in an October 2016 survey of violent crime statistics in 33 King County cities, crime reporting is no small concern. And the addition of a religious affiliation stipulation to the ordinance stemmed from the experience of the neighboring City of SeaTac, which amid the immigration paranoia of the 2016 presidential campaign had dismissed an interim city manager who had asked the city's GIS staff to





City of Burien
Mayor Jimmy
Matta in city hall



The Alvarez García family prepares for a *quinceañera* celebration at Angelica's Bridal Boutique and Spa Salon in Burien.

generate a map identifying where SeaTac's Muslims lived.

"The council didn't want that to happen here," says Inlow-Hood.

After a heated round of public testimony that packed Burien's council chambers, the ordinance was approved by a four-to-three vote, dividing the council and exposing a rift that was opening within the community.

"Ordinance 651 has rubbed some people the wrong way because it gave overt legal standing in our community to a practical police policy that not everyone wanted to face," explains Irene Danysh, a Burien resident and college professor currently teaching the principles of "active citizenship" to nonprofit leaders in Ukraine. "When people stand up for their rights, not everyone is comfortable."

The discomfort in Burien would only escalate during the summer and fall of 2017. On July 7, Burien's city clerk received a citizens' initiative petition from Respect Washington, an organization with ties to a Michigan hate group, threatening legal action if Burien's council failed to either pass a resolution to repeal Ordinance 651 or place a proposed repeal ordinance on its November general election ballot. Unsettlingly to the city's immigrant community, according to Respect Washington, the petition had been signed by more than 3,735 registered Burien voters. After another bout of rancorous debate and public comment at city hall—so rancorous that at one meeting, Burien's mayor ordered police to clear council chambers—Burien's electeds narrowly voted to submit the repeal measure to voters. Immigration rights activists sued, and in September a superior court judge struck the measure from the ballot. Late in October, Respect Washington countered by mailing a scandalous

flyer to every resident who had signed its petition, asking them to vote for four council candidates (including an incumbent who, it indicated, had signed its failed repeal petition) who were running for reelection under a Burien Proud, Burien First ticket. The flyer also listed the addresses of Burien residents with Latino-sounding names (under the headline "These Are Illegal Immigrants") who had allegedly committed crimes.

MATTA FIRST CONSIDERED RUNNING FOR OFFICE WHEN A STRANGER CONFRONTED HIM IN THE PARKING LOT YELLING, "YOUR PRESIDENT IS GONE, AND YOU'RE GOING HOME!"

On October 30, Deputy Mayor Nancy Tosta addressed a crowd that had gathered in Burien Town Square for a press conference convened by King County Executive Dow Constantine.

"I have not seen or felt this kind of hate before, hate with a desire to cause harm or see hurt come to others," said Tosta, whose seat was also up for reelection. "Hate does not empathize; hate sees enemies. Hate does not allow you to put yourself in someone else's shoes. Hate assumes the worst about others. Respect Washington has and continues to fuel hate in this community, and I for one am willing to stand up and condemn what they are trying to do to us!"



Burien Town Square

And the majority of Burien stood behind her, upending its council at the polls a week later, rejecting the Burien Firsters, reelecting Tosta, and installing the city's first two Latinos and its first LGBTQ councilmember—all political novices—at city hall.

HOW DOES A CITY RECOVER from that kind of acrimony?

It starts when a formerly all-white city council appoints a Latino as its mayor. At a council meeting on January 22, 2018, when it came to a vote, the three newcomers rallied around the nomination of Jimmy Matta, a union leader and commercial contractor (“We are at a very historic moment in the history of our city,” said Pedro Olguin, followed by Krystal Marx, who said, “I believe it is time to elevate the experiences and skills of people who have been held down, in addition to recognizing that experience comes from many different places.”), while three of the four council veterans supported Nancy Tosta.

“I know our city, and I know our council would fare well with either choice as mayor,” said Councilmember Austin Bell, a fourth-generation Burien resident and University of Washington graduate student who has served on the council since 2015. “So when I think about this, I also think about the symbolic vote we are taking. Trust in government has been decaying over these last decades, and it has only gotten worse with the rhetoric we hear from our national government. Today, I think it’s very important that we send a strong signal to the members of our community who are most concerned that we are listening and that there’s change afoot. That is why I am very excited to cast my vote for Jimmy Matta.”

The room erupted in applause as Matta’s name was placed on the dais, and the city’s first Latino mayor took his seat at the center of the council.

“I believe I can bring the healing to this community that we need,” said Matta. “I love Burien; I’ve lived here for 20 years. Am I going to have some hiccups up here at this dais? Yes. Am I going to have some hiccups as mayor of this city? Yes. The one thing I can tell you I won’t have a hiccup on is the value of making sure that everybody is heard. It doesn’t matter how you stand on issues. What matters is that you are heard.”

When Matta first considered running for office (after the local Women’s March in January 2017, when a stranger confronted him

Common Cause

Q&A MYUNG LEE

Myung Lee, executive director of Cities of Service—a nonprofit founded in 2009 by New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg while he was in office—discusses how officials and citizens can work together for the greater good.



Cities of Service is known for impact volunteering. What is that?

It is a little bit different than traditional volunteering as you and I know it, in that it is the city that’s actually reaching out to the community and saying, “Hey, we would like to solve XYZ problems, and we would like you as the citizens to help.” In the past few years, we have been expanding the work we do to go beyond impact volunteering to look at how cities can engage their citizens better to co-design, co-create, and co-resolve issues that the cities have.

Is trust harder for cities to come by in current times?

There is all kinds of research that talks about how people don’t trust government; however, there is also promising data that show that trust at the local level is higher than it is at the federal and state levels. I think that’s because you have government officials at the local level that are going to the same grocery store that you do, the same coffee shop you do. Even in New York City,

the mayor goes to the Y around the corner from my house.

Does that give local leaders an advantage in building trust?

In some ways it’s advantageous, and in some ways it’s not—running into your constituents on a daily basis, you’re going to be able to have a better finger on the pulse of what’s happening in your city and the challenges constituents are facing. It’s also a double-edged sword, because then you’re held accountable for things you can’t control. In most cities, the mayors don’t control schools (because the states do), yet when the kids aren’t learning or teachers are unhappy, most of the people are going to start yelling and screaming at the mayor.

You say town hall meetings are not the way to solve things. Why not?

Town halls can be one part of a bigger strategy, but at some point, we got away from a democracy where it’s representative and people are having conversations and working together to solve problems to one

CONTINUED ON P.19 ▶

EVERY CITY HAS ITS PROBLEMS. AS OPPOSED TO POINTING A FINGER AND ASSIGNING BLAME, HOW DO WE WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR OUR CITIZENS AND OUR COMMUNITY?"

—BRIAN WILSON **BURIEN CITY MANAGER**



Burien City Manager
Brian Wilson

in the parking lot of a Safeway, yelling, “Your president is gone, and you’re going home!”), he confessed his doubts to a friend, who replied, “You know, Jimmy, you have a story that needs to be told, because some people will find common ground.”

Accepting that logic as his mandate, on the campaign trail Matta shared his story with whoever would listen, about how his parents emigrated in 1976 from Guatemala to the United States to escape a civil war and about his life growing up as the son of itinerant farmworkers: how his family relied on the generosity of food banks, what it was like as a kid to sleep in a van without heat during the winter, that his father died of a drug overdose, that his mother still mows lawns in Burien because she can’t afford to retire.

Now that he’s Burien’s mayor, Matta’s story resonates even more, especially to the Latino community, which has embraced him as their *alcalde*.

“After the election, we’re seeing many more Spanish speakers

coming to our council meetings and to the front desk at city hall for pet permits and other licenses,” says Inlow-Hood. “For whatever reason, people from the Latino community didn’t feel comfortable coming to city hall, but they do now.”

Councilmember Olguin puts it this way: “When you have someone that looks like you and reflects your experience in the community, you feel more welcome.”

Being the new public face of Burien, Matta relied on City Manager Brian Wilson to assemble and oil the civic machinery that would restore community trust in local government.

“When I took this position, there was division on the council and certainly some division in the community,” says Wilson, a Burien native hired as city manager in May 2017, after serving as police chief and chief of staff for Federal Way’s mayor. “One of the reasons I took this position is that I grew up here; I’m from this community. . . . Every city has its problems. As opposed to pointing a finger and assigning blame, how do we work together to make a difference for our citizens and our community?”

That means doing things like staffing Burien’s front desk with Spanish speakers, offering a multilingual translation service for incoming calls, and making interpreters available at all city functions.

“I will make a business case for this as well,” Wilson adds. “The service we provide our citizens, whether it’s public works or parks—we need to have a staff that represents the community we serve. We’re going to provide better service if we do that.”

One of the first, and most important, strategic hires Burien’s new administration made following the election was Colleen Brandt-Schluter, the city’s first full-time human services manager. Based on recommendations from a new citizen-staffed human services commission, Brandt-Schluter will coordinate grant funding to local nonprofits providing social services like housing assistance, homeless shelters, food pantries, and youth programs. Currently, the seven-member commission is evaluating 60 requests for funding that nonprofits have submitted for the next biennium, requests totaling nearly \$950,000. Even though the city only has \$347,000 to work with (compared to Redmond, a similar-size city with a human services budget of \$784,135), Wilson welcomes the opportunity to make an impact.

“Our city council took the important step of trying to figure out how to better serve our most vulnerable residents by creating this position,” says Brandt-Schluter, a 12-year veteran of the human services department at SeaTac, where she managed a budget of \$515,000. “The goal is to improve the quality of essential services here in Burien. It isn’t going to matter where you go in south King County; you’re definitely going to feel the suburbanization of poverty and the challenges of pretty flat budgets and not huge revenue streams while trying to address increasing needs.”

It’s not the only area in which Burien hopes to make the most of limited resources. This spring, tapping its professional services budget, Burien partnered with nonprofit Global to Local to launch an innovative outreach program, Community Connectors, that it pioneered at the City of Tukwila. Circulating flyers in five different languages (from Spanish to Tigrinya, an Eritrean dialect), Burien recruited and trained residents who identified as African Ameri-

can, Latino, and Nepalese/Burmese—as well as elders and youth—to serve as liaisons between the city and their particular constituencies, facilitating communication and advising the city about how to be more culturally sensitive in its outreach efforts, such as by helping hone the wording of questions in a community survey the city will deploy to guide budgetary decisions in the coming year.

“This is important work because communities do want to be civically engaged,” stresses Global to Local’s leadership and engagement manager, Niesha Brooks. “You don’t know what you don’t know; relationship-building and civic engagement is like getting to know a neighbor you’ve never had a chance to meet.”

Wilson even applied that vein of thinking to the selection of Burien’s new police chief. After the city’s longtime chief retired, Wilson invited the community to participate in the selection process. In addition to a multilingual online survey (asking residents to explain what they most wanted in a new chief and their police department), with help from Inlow-Hood and Brandt-Schluter, in March Burien began hosting the first of seven roundtable discussions at a variety of venues, including coffee shops and a King County Housing Authority apartment complex populated primarily by non-English speakers. One meeting, held in the city’s community center, was conducted in the format of a presidential town hall debate, with a moderator (Wilson) asking four finalists to answer a series of questions submitted by the audience (e.g., “What will you do to develop anti-racist policies and practices in the police department?”) and then asking the audience to score the candidates by their responses.

“We took great pains and plans to really reach out to the community to get that feedback about what people are looking for in their police services and their police chief,” says Wilson. “We needed to be able to reach out to many diverse communities with different languages and interpreters and go out to different neighborhoods. We’re pretty pleased with that process.”

THE LARGER PROCESS OF COMMUNITY healing, however, remains a work in progress. On March 28, just when the city seemed to have put the rancor of 2017 behind it, tragedy struck. Late that evening, two teenage girls were shot and killed in a spate of alleged gang-related violence at Alturas, an apartment complex that’s home to more than 600 families, predominantly non-English-speaking Latinos. The next morning, students and parents arrived at Highline High (where Latinos outnumber whites by nearly two to one) to see that the school’s spirit rock had been defaced, spray-painted with a swastika and the letters “KKK.” There ensued candlelight vigils, marches, and rallies; demands that the city do something about gang violence; and murmurs that Ordinance 651—and those who supported it—were to blame.

On April 2, an emotional crowd again packed council chambers, and dozens of citizens spoke their minds. This time, though, instead of allowing the situation to escalate, the city called an intervention, spreading the word in several different languages that there would be a town hall meeting: a community conversation about violence and how to prevent it. A week later, Burien Library’s multipurpose room resembled a US citizenship ceremony, a jumble of people of all ages conversing in a Babel of languages mixing with city staff and the council.

“That was a galvanizing moment,” says Inlow-Hood. “There

where people are just yelling at each other.

What’s an alternative?

In Detroit, the mayor does these meetings called house meetings in people’s living rooms. The host invites neighbors and friends, and the mayor asks three questions: What is it that we do well, what should we improve at, and what’s your dream for your neighborhood? Around those questions, they have a conversation. His staff furiously type on their computers to find the answer to questions that come up. They try to solve issues with the citizens as they’re sitting there. The mayor gets to share information and recruit people to join his efforts, and the residents get to have their questions answered and their concerns addressed. It’s a win-win.

The immediacy of that is great.

Even when he has to say, “There’s nothing I can do because I don’t control that,” people appreciate the fact that he’s listening and paying attention and trying to do something. He’s telling you the answer even if it’s not the answer you want to hear.

How else can a city build trust among elected officials and citizens?

Focus on a problem at hand that everyone can agree is a problem. For example, if there’s a park in your community that is a haven for illegal activity, that is something that everybody

can agree is a problem. Coming together as city officials and citizens gives you the opportunity to showcase the strengths and the resources that each side can bring to the table, regardless of political parties or ideologies or anything else that could get in the way.

How can government officials harness the energy of people who want to make their communities better?

Some cities are going out to citizens and saying, “We’ve got problems; we want you to better help us analyze the data because we don’t have the resources internally.” Some cities are opening up their government to complete co-design, collaboration, and participation from citizens—entering into contracts about what everyone will bring to the table—and there are others that are writing city constitutions in conjunction with their citizenry. There’s definitely a movement afoot.

Anything else we should know about building trust?

It doesn’t happen overnight. It is built over time, based on one act after another after another. Cities also have to communicate and close the loop. If you’re going to survey people to get their insights, you have to get back to them and say what you did with those insights; you can’t just take and not give back. Like any other relationship, it takes time and effort, but it’s worth it in the end.



Mayor Jimmy Matta speaks at the April 9 town hall held in Burien Library.

were 140 people at that meeting, and the way we structured it, we said, ‘You’re not going to come and yell. We’re going to sit in circles [and talk to each other].’... There were a lot of youth in the room, maybe 25 percent were high school students, people from the apartment complex where the shooting happened. We had Spanish and Vietnamese interpreters there. It was really interesting because people who had been really divided and vocal were sitting side by side, listening to kids talk about what had happened.” And when they were done, a representative from each group reported to the larger assembly the gist of what had been discussed.

Patricia Mejia, a counselor who runs the parks and rec department’s teen program, stood up and talked for her group, a cross-section of Burien’s youth.

“We spent a lot of time digging deep into the individual situations they’ve been through, and they feel like a lot of the adults in this community aren’t—I don’t want to say failing them—but they aren’t really listening to what’s actually going on.... We have a lot of kids who need us as adults to step up and really start listening to them and help them as individuals, but also make them feel safe at home, at school, at their apartments.”

In other words, in their city.


In the weeks that followed, Burien chartered a task force to tackle youth violence and reached out to stakeholders to help restart a social services program at Alturas that had been

defunded. The mayor’s teenage daughter even volunteered to revive the city’s youth council, reporting to the main council about her progress. And on April 17, the city hired its new police chief: Ted Boe, an 18-year veteran of the King County Sheriff’s Office, who promised the audience at his community interview on April 12: “One of the things a police chief needs to do is to be engaged in the community. If I become your chief, you are going to meet my wife, you are going to meet my 5- and 8-year-old daughters, you are going to see us at the grocery store, you’re going to see us at the church.”

Just like Burien’s mayor. Following the shooting, Jimmy Matta spent many days at Alturas, where teens jockeyed to take Snapchat selfies with their *alcalde*, and many hours on the phone, cold-calling parents of kids who needed help, counseling them in Spanish. On April 24, when a group of family and friends of one of the girls who was killed organized a march from city hall to the site of the shooting and back again, Burien’s mayor marched right with them.

“I always thought I would just plant a seed,” he says. “I didn’t think I’d win my election and be the mayor, what I am today. I am very humbled by the councilmembers who asked me to step up and be mayor. I am very humbled by the respect I’ve received from my city manager and people coming up to me asking, ‘How can we do this better?’ To have a staff person say, ‘You know, you opened my eyes.’ To have people say, ‘Can I give you a hug?’ I believe we’re going to change people’s minds and hearts, one person at a time.”

As Matta was marching down Ambaum Boulevard alongside teenagers from Alturas, a heckler shouted, “Mayor, you’re going to have blood on your hands until you change your policy on immigration!”

“These kids are hearing this while I’m walking,” the mayor recalls. “So I tell the kids, ‘Hey, he has the right to say that. We have the right to run for office, and one day you’ll be able to do that like I did.’ What Respect Washington did is, they divided our community. But at the end of the day, I will always believe that love will win. And we won, right?” 



Teen program assistant for the City of Burien Patricia Mejia (center) interacts with teens at a Teen Late Night event at Sylvester Middle School.

Citywise

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If someone on Twitter asks for recommendations on a good place to get pho, why can't the police department or other government agency answer that question?

—CITY 101 P.23 ▶



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24 EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS **26** THE WA VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 2018



Capitol Gains

Tips for furthering the legislative goals and issues important to your city

GET in the habit of inviting legislators of both parties to your city's events, groundbreaking, and celebrations.

LOOK at your legislative delegations through not only a local lens but a regional lens—it will help ensure that you are working with both sides of the aisle.

THINK about messaging your issues in ways that can appeal to both parties. One legislator may have sympathy for the social service aspects of the issue you're working on, while the public safety benefits might appeal to the next one.

DON'T hold grudges. The legislator you disagree vehemently with on one issue may become your most vital ally on the next one.

IF you choose, as a citizen or for professional reasons, to contribute to legislative races, think about donating to members of both parties who have been helpful to your cause.

PURPLE PROS

The benefits to cities of working both sides of the aisle

DOUG LEVY OWNER, OUTCOMES BY LEVY, LLC

WITH A NOD to Prince and Husky fans—and with apologies to Cougs everywhere—city officials in our state who want to get things done in Olympia would be well-advised to “think purple.”

Purple is a political term signifying a mixture of “blue” (Democrats) and “red” (Republicans). It's a helpful lens through which to view the Washington Legislature, where Democrats outnumber Republicans by razor-thin margins in the Senate (25-24) and House (50-48). That alone

GETTING LEGISLATORS OF BOTH PARTIES INTERESTED IN YOUR END-GAME GOALS ADDS CURRENCY TO YOUR EFFORTS.

should inspire us to view the political prism differently than we do in regard to that “other Washington,” where toxicity, demagoguery, and political paralysis seem to rule the day.

No matter the outcome of the November elections, it still makes good strategic sense for cities to use a “purple” strategy in furthering their legislative agendas and outreach—for a host of reasons:

- Bread-and-butter issues for cities—fiscal matters, capital and infrastructure investments, public safety, housing and homelessness—are of keen interest to both parties. In the nearly quarter-century that I have lobbied in Olympia, I've never heard a lawmaker claim that such issues are the exclusive domain of one party or the other.

- Getting legislators of both parties interested in your end-game goals adds currency to your efforts. Legislators who see a mix of “Ds” and “Rs” signed onto a

bill can immediately focus on the policy and forget about whether it is politically motivated.

- Savvy lobbyists know they can't dismiss one party or the other. Let's say you work on a bill that clears a committee on a party-line 5-4 vote—or somehow makes it off the floor on a 50-48 vote. What do you have then? A bill likely to soak up precious floor time, and one that looks like a study in confrontation rather than collaboration. With few exceptions, legislative leaders tend to leave such bills on the cutting-room floor.

- It takes weeks, if not months, to build alliances necessary to pass a bill, but in the blink of an eye, a single member crossing party lines can undo all of that hard work.

- In Olympia, a simple majority doesn't always cut it. A poignant reminder came when the 2017-19 Capital Budget stalled over the water-rights fight in the wake of the Hirst decision. Republicans could—and did—block action because our state Constitution requires a 60 percent majority to pass bonds that finance such a budget.

How does all this translate to you and the issues of importance to your city? It means you should cultivate coalitions featuring members of both parties and do the front-line bipartisan work that helps mitigate the risks outlined above. It's not a 100 percent formula for success (that doesn't exist in Olympia), but it will enhance your chances of getting your issues to the finish line. **C**

Doug Levy is the owner and operator of Outcomes By Levy, LLC. He has worked in the legislative arena since 1995 and currently represents a mix of cities, outdoor recreation associations, and arts and culture organizations.



SOCIAL SKILLS

Community policing in the age of instant information

VICTOR MASTERS TUKWILA POLICE DEPARTMENT

FOR YEARS, law enforcement agencies have struggled with building and maintaining relationships within their communities. Having a strong relationship with the community is imperative, especially in the age of instant information and social media. When an incident goes viral, it can be viewed by millions of people within minutes. Getting information out quickly exemplifies transparency and helps to curb false narratives and misinformation that can result in tension between law enforcement and the community.

There are roughly 2.2 billion Facebook users, 330 million Twitter users, and 800 million Instagram users. To make contact with billions of people, you need nothing but a computer or smartphone and internet access. But to truly connect with these billions of people, you need to be able to get their attention and engage them in two-way dialog. If you say something and no one hears it, then you

are just talking to yourself—and if you choose to say nothing, someone else will speak for you.

Rather than just putting out facts and bland information, departments need to engage the online population the same way they would during a casual in-person conversation. If someone on Twitter asks for recommendations on a good place to get pho, why can't the police department or other government agency answer that question? When a resident posts a photo of a personal accomplishment, congratulate them for it. When putting out information, add humor to it.

Make even the mundane upcoming road closure announcement interesting to read; otherwise, no one will read it. Tell a story, and include the little details and nuances. Write like you are writing to a friend. Share your successes with the community, but make them feel like they are a part of the reason for those successes. Rather than just touting an achievement, share that achievement,

and thank the community for their support and assistance in making that achievement possible.

Most importantly, as a police department or government agency, promote your city! In many cities, police department social media pages tend to have thousands more followers than the city pages. Be an advocate for your city, the businesses, and the residents. Use that follower base to be an active part of the community and not just another branch of the local government. Promote new businesses, upcoming events, and things of interest even if they are not related to law enforcement. Show that your department is a member of the community and not just a part of the government. **C**

Officer Victor Masters has been with the Tukwila Police Department since 2015 and serves as the department's public information officer. Prior to that, he was a federal agent with the US Border Patrol, where he was assigned to the Public Affairs Office.



Officer Friendly

These excerpts from actual Tukwila Police Department tweets show how being engaging can inspire citizens to engage:

↳ **Angela White** and 10 others Retweeted your Tweet
 Mar 14: If your package with a brick of coke doesn't arrive, it is because we have it. Please swing by the station to pick it up and bring your ID 🙌

Angela White - 3m
 @TukwilaPD This has to be one of the best, and funniest, tweets I have ever seen. LOL I hope the person claims their missing package. LOL

↩️ 🔄 ❤️ 1

Tukwila Police @TukwilaPD - 29 Jun 2017
 If you are going to give us somebody else's name when we ask for yours, you might not want to give us a name of someone that has warrants 🚓

💬 3 🔄 14 ❤️ 60

Tukwila Police @TukwilaPD - 20 Oct 2017
 Unfortuitous timing for the man who was exiting a store after shoplifting just as we were walking in to arrest a different one for the same.

💬 2 🔄 1 ❤️ 15



Another Notable Project

Woodland Make a Difference Day

For over 20 years, Woodland High School seniors have worked with volunteers and businesses to help those less fortunate during an October “Make a Difference Day.” Beginning in September, the seniors meet with the city to plan and publicize the event, asking for projects and volunteers. Good old-fashioned flyers are plastered throughout the community, and the city extends the outreach on its website and on Facebook. Project requests start pouring in from residents who need help with their homes and yards. Organizers also connect with a local nonprofit, Woodland Action Center, to coordinate work. A free hazardous waste drop-off site is also set up.

In 2017, 175 volunteers participated, over a dozen local businesses provided financial donations, and 34 residents (elderly and/or those with disabilities) received yardwork, garbage pickup, and lawn care. Other community work included litter pickup, plantings, weeding, window washing, and general cleanup at local parks, schools, park-and-rides, the Woodland Care Center, and the historical museum. But beyond the cleaning, young and elderly residents, experienced and inexperienced volunteers, and those less fortunate and those with plenty came together to satisfy larger community needs.

RALLY CAPS

Sequim pursues beautiful days with its neighborhoods.

WINNER AWC MUNICIPAL EXCELLENCE AWARDS

IN 2015, the Sequim Neighborhood Revitalization Coalition embarked on a downtown exterior property survey that tacked into a short-term neighborhood trash cleanup strategy. Buoyed by partnerships with Habitat for Humanity, the Sequim Sunrise Rotary Club, Rotary International, USDA Rural Development, First Federal Bank, the Olympic Community Action Program, and concerned citizens, the coalition went to work.

Rally in the Alley launched in 2016 with donated refuse containers and volunteers who scoured one downtown quadrant; in one hour, they cleaned up the neighborhood, collecting 4.8 tons of trash. Rally in the Alley 2 focused on another quadrant of the city and hauled in 8.28 tons. In 2017, city council expanded the program to include the entire city with three more events. Total tonnage thus far has been 47.99, and four more events are scheduled for 2018, with 400 volunteers and 15 organizations involved.

The program captured attention beyond city limits. Habitat for Humanity selected Sequim and the Habitat of Humanity of Clallam County as one of 25 communities nationally to test their Quality of Life Framework, through which Sequim will receive help in surveying neighborhoods over time to see if the coalition’s impacts can be measured. And the Kettering Foundation invited the city to join its twice-a-year City Managers Forum on civic engagement.

With the program expansion in 2017, Sequim even began the more formal process of defining its seven different neighborhoods. The city met with 170 community members representing every neighborhood area, and an internal team of trained facilitators continues to

connect with two dozen neighborhood ambassadors and volunteers for conversations focused on projects, connections, and the importance of neighborhoods.

All of this work led to Service Fest, an event bringing Habitat for Humanity Care-A-Vanners into Sequim (this June) for neighborhood revitalization instead of the better-known home building. Twenty RVs were set to arrive and work

RALLY IN THE ALLEY LAUNCHED IN 2016; IN ONE HOUR, THEY CLEANED UP ONE NEIGHBORHOOD, COLLECTING 4.8 TONS OF TRASH.

for two weeks, partnering on projects on both public and private property. The Sequim Makeover covers everything from constructing neighborhood kiosks and creating nature paths in semirural areas without sidewalks to building demolition and roofing.

Finally, a new budget process starting in fall 2018 brings in neighborhood input and focus group ideas for capital planning and priorities. City staff is supporting council to build in neighborhood engagement and dialogue on “wicked” policy issues like housing before recommendations emerge. The city also plans to launch a citizens’ academy in 2019 with a neighborhood organization and advocacy component.

To bring all of the pieces together after Service Fest, Sequim wants to set up a quarterly ambassador program that combines Rally in the Alley, the citizens’ academy, community budget/issue input, and future Service Fests while supporting city service delivery overall. **C**



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Choice Words

A plain-language translation of concepts relevant to the Washington Voting Rights Act of 2018

At-large elections: Voters of the entire city elect councilmembers.

Single-member district elections: Candidates must live within a district and are elected only by voters within that district.

Racially polarized voting: A pattern of people voting based on race. For example, white voters consistently voting for Candidate A and African American voters consistently voting for Candidate B—regardless of the race of the candidates themselves.

Vote dilution: The process by which votes from a racial, ethnic, or linguistic minority group are consistently “cancelled out” by votes from the majority; can occur as a result of at-large elections. For example, if a city’s voters are 20% African American and 80% white—and if racially polarized voting exists—then the candidates preferred by white voters will win routinely every election.

Protected class: A racial, ethnic, or linguistic minority group.

NOTE THE VOTE

Opportunities and risks from the WVRA of 2018

JOHN SAFARLI
FLOYD, PFLUEGER & RINGER

THE WASHINGTON VOTING Rights Act of 2018 (WVRA) is an important law that will impact nearly every city in our state. The WVRA has two main parts that offer both opportunities and risks. The first part gives cities the legal authority to voluntarily change the way councilmembers are elected. The second part provides voters the ability to put their city on notice of a potential violation of the WVRA and to bring a lawsuit if the city does not change its election system in response to the notice.

The WVRA went into effect on June 7, 2018. Beginning on that date, every city can change how councilmembers are elected. For example, a city that elects all of its councilmembers at-large can modify its system to elect councilmembers from single-member districts. There are several requirements for this process. First, and most importantly, any new system cannot “create or perpetuate the dilution of the votes” of a protected class, meaning that voters who belong to a racial, ethnic, or linguistic minority cannot be disadvantaged by the change. The ability of these voters to elect their candidates of choice must be improved under the new system. Whether a protected class will be better or worse off will require careful legal and demographic analysis, and any city that considers changing its election system should consult with its attorneys and possibly hire a demographer.

Second, there must be sufficient public notice of any election system change. The law requires a minimum of one public hearing on the new system, and this hearing must be held at least one week before

the change takes effect. Cities should consider going beyond this minimum by holding multiple hearings, including listening sessions that are conducted in diverse geographic areas and vary in nature (in high school gymnasiums, at neighborhood gatherings, etc.). Also, if more than 5 percent of residents (or 500 residents, whichever is fewer) have limited English proficiency and speak a language other than English, then cities must air public service announcements on radio or television and provide written notification in those languages.

Cities that are thinking about changing their election system should also consider the practical impacts. If a city wants to change from at-large to single-member district elections, what will happen if a district is drawn that includes more than one incumbent? If a new system is adopted, will all positions have to be contested in the same year, or can the seats be staggered? While the WVRA promises to

EVERY CITY THAT WANTS TO CHANGE ITS ELECTION SYSTEM HAS THAT AUTHORITY AS OF JUNE 7, AND VOTERS OF PROTECTED CLASSES WHO FEEL THAT THEIR VOTING RIGHTS HAVE BEEN IMPAIRED CAN PUT THEIR CITY ON NOTICE AS OF JULY 19.

enhance voting opportunities for racial, ethnic, or linguistic minorities, any change must be navigated carefully.

The second major feature of the WVRA is the notice-lawsuit provision. Beginning on July 19, 2018, any local voter can put their city on notice of a potential WVRA violation. Importantly, cities with populations of less than 1,000 residents are exempt, meaning they cannot be put on notice or be sued. The notice must identify the protected class that is allegedly disadvantaged under the status quo and must include a new proposed election system. In response to the notice, the city



must “work in good faith” with the voter, which includes sharing of demographic data and other information. If the city decides to change its election system in response to the notice, it must seek a court order endorsing the new system. This court approval is required even if the city adopts the exact same plan that the voter proposed.

If the city does not obtain a court order within 180 days of receiving the voter’s notice, then the voter may file a lawsuit in superior court (after July 1, 2021, this time threshold changes to 90 days). Importantly, a voter who files a lawsuit under the WVRA is held to a lower burden of proof than a plaintiff filing a lawsuit under the federal Voting Rights Act (VRA). For example, if a city has a numerically small racial, ethnic, or

linguistic minority group—or one that is geographically spread across the city—then a voter probably could not succeed under the federal VRA. But the WVRA does not require proof of a numerically large or geographically compact minority group. As a result, cities that would be safe from a federal VRA lawsuit are vulnerable under the WVRA.

Risk factors for a WVRA lawsuit include the size and location of racial, ethnic, or linguistic minority groups within a city. Also, controversies that focus on geography (such as disputes about too little funding going to a neighborhood) or racially, ethnically, or linguistically charged issues should be considered risk factors. Finally, cities should examine their election history. If candidates preferred by protected-class voters are

consistently defeated by candidates supported by white voters, then cities are more likely to lose a vote dilution lawsuit under the WVRA.

The WVRA presents both opportunity and risk for nearly all cities in our state. Every city that wants to change its election system has that authority as of June 7, and voters of protected classes who feel that their voting rights have been impaired can put their city on notice as of July 19. While these dates are important, cities should not wait to study their options. **C**

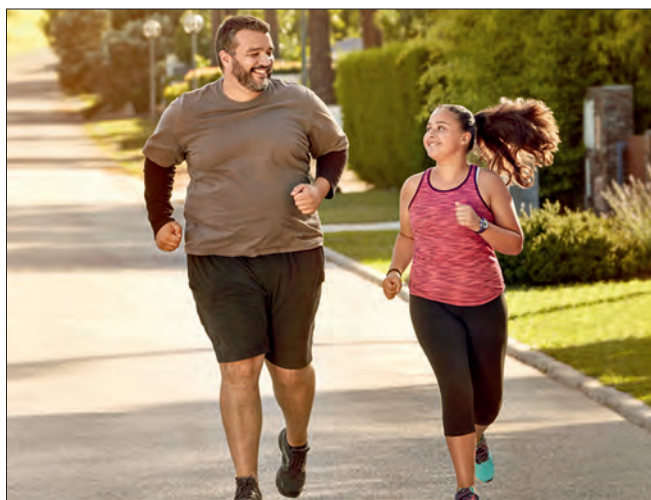
John Safarli’s practice focuses on defending local governments and corporations in employment law, civil rights, wrongful death, intellectual property, and voting rights cases before trial and appellate courts and administrative agencies.



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Cityscape



Talk Therapy

When it comes to building trust, communities thrive when they embrace differences rather than fear.

BREACHING BARRIERS AND BRIDGING divides requires a mindset that takes you out of groupthink and into the realm of mutual respect and transparency. Both leaders and residents, when they get swept up in a crowd response, can lose sight of the intricacies that govern communication on a personal level.

Every community is different, complete with relationships that may be built on years of interactions and patterns—and perhaps inequities. Building on those relationships—strengthening them, repairing them, reconfiguring them—is one of the strongest forces for change. It falls to leaders to create safe spaces for people to share their stories, skills, and networks so that we all can learn from one another.

Look around and take note of who is never at the table, then make a place for their voice. What do they value? What do they believe? Encourage community ownership. Address existing harms. Connect resources, and mobilize those with and without power around the issues that need attention. Be open, share, and collaborate. Working together, your community will grow in trust.

Leaders must be willing to let others see them in a personal sense: not as civic bureaucrats, but as friends and neighbors. And they must see their community for what it is. We aren't all the same. People young and old, of varying races, shapes, and sizes, all have a stake in the conversation. When the masks come off, trust takes shape, resilience thrives, and together a community can manage its future. [C](#)

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Sen. **Kevin Van De Wege**

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Rep. **Nicole Macri**
Sen. **Mark Mullet**
Sen. **Jeannie Darneille**

Advancing and protecting city interests

Rep. **Tana Senn**

Preserving the Public Works Trust Fund

Rep. **Steve Tharinger**
Rep. **Richard DeBolt**
Rep. **Beth Doglio**
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