

TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
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CONVENE: 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Debbie Sullivan and Councilmembers Peter Agabi, Michael Althausen, Joan Cathey, Leatta Dahlhoff, Angela Jefferson, and Charlie Schneider.

Excused: Councilmember Eileen Swarthout.

Staff: City Administrator Lisa Parks, City Attorney Karen Kirkpatrick, Community Development Director Michael Matlock, Parks and Recreation Director Chuck Denney, Finance Director Troy Niemeyer, Water Resources and Sustainability Director Dan Smith, and Communications Manager Ann Cook.

**TOGETHER! HOST
HOMES PILOT
PROGRAM / STAY
HOME PROGRAM
PROJECT UPDATE:**

City Administrator Parks reported the City partnered with TOGETHER on a two-year pilot program intended to house unaccompanied youths within the community. The program's goal creates safe short-term housing options for students by matching them with host families within the community. The two-year contract ends at the end of August. She introduced Tami Mason Lathrop, TOGETHER Host Homes Director to provide an update on the outcome of the program.

Ms. Lathrop reported the program's vision and mission is ensuring all high schools have a safe and affirming home. The Host Homes Program provides safe, short-term hosted housing for unaccompanied high school students experiencing housing instability.

The program was launched in early 2022. The first student referrals were received in February and April 2022. Both students were matched with host homes in August 2022. Another student from North Thurston Public Schools was housed in fall 2022. From January to the present, the program has matched and housed seven students with three of the students located in the Tumwater School District and five students housed through kinship matches (previous relationships). The program is managed by three staff members.

Initially, staff did not anticipate the time required to facilitate the program to a point where everyone could trust and believe in the program and its goals to achieve desired outcomes. The first students were placed with a good host family who previously served as a foster care parent. Staff adjusted and course corrected the program while navigating the areas of needed focus to establish and expand the program.

Ms. Lathrop shared information on some of the successes of the program. Two of the participating students graduated from high school in June. At the beginning of the year, both students were at-risk for not graduating. Both students received scholarships to St. Martin's University and South

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Puget Sound Community College. Another student in the Tumwater School District reunified with a parent. The Community Schools Manager was able to assist the family with rental support for an apartment.

Main challenges identified to date include student mental and behavioral health issues that are often beyond the scope of the program and the host families. The program attempted to add a licensed mental health counselor to provide support to program staff and to host families. However, the individual was not able to commit to the program. Other difficulties were obtaining a parent's permission for the youth to receive assistance. The program was unable to obtain permission from several parents. As the state required notarization of the contract, that requirement created a barrier for some families. Ms. Lathrop said she was able to be recertified as a notary and is able to visit with parents and students to complete the necessary paperwork.

Similar to other organizations across the country, staffing has been difficult especially because of the importance of hiring resources that are able to understand the trauma many students are experiencing and the ability to build trust between the student, case manager, and the host family.

Successes of the program include students obtaining government ID cards, completing driver education courses, opening bank accounts, and completing the school year with passing grades or better. Three students received awards at the end of the school year. Students received assistance to enroll for counseling. All students received budgeting assistance as each student receives a monthly stipend of \$50.

Several students and hosts exiting the program provided feedback. The host family indicated program support and response time exceeded their expectations. Case management and wrap-around services with the Community Schools Program assisted in improving behaviors and building trusts with adults. Monthly team meetings were recognized as helpful in building the communication between students and hosts. Hosts were able to submit requests for reimbursement each month not to exceed \$300.

Student feedback indicated that hosts should expect some time for students to adjust to their new environment. Students reported the program enabled them to focus more on school versus where they would live. The top request from students was having a cell phone. Through donations from the community, students received cell phones and service.

The intent was to match 10 students each year. The first year of the program produced no matches; however, the second year resulted in three matches in Tumwater. The program is intended to develop and foster professional relationships with community partners to ensure continuity and care and service provisions. The program is a member of the Thurston

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County Anchor Community Initiative Cohort. Many other non-profits have forwarded referrals to the program. Legal Counsel for Youth and Children (LCYC) worked with several of the students. The program developed a strong relationship with the ASHHO Cultural Center in Tumwater and with the Tumwater School District and North Thurston Public Schools.

Ms. Lathrop thanked the Council for supporting the program. Funds the program received afforded an effective and strong program that is gaining momentum.

Councilmember Dahlhoff asked about future goals and any adjustments of program goals. Ms. Lathrop said one goal is expanding the program countywide. Currently, the immediate focus is working with the Olympia School District to ensure all local school districts can access the program. The goal is to serve 10 unaccompanied students in Tumwater. The program is only successful if students are willing to participate. The next school year goal is to house seven Tumwater students.

Councilmember Althausen questioned whether placement of student in an Olympia residence would require the school district to provide transportation services based on the provisions in the McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Ms. Lathrop affirmed participating students are entitled to transportation services when living outside the school district.

Councilmember Althausen asked about any other structural issues regarding state or federal requirements that impede the placement process. Ms. Lathrop said the main barrier has been the requirement for notary services. Additionally, contracts must be updated every six months. Several parents of students are often struggling with mental health and addiction challenges, as well as not living in the local area. Several students were successfully enrolled because they lacked a legal guardian. The program collaborates with LCYC to enable students to work with an attorney to identify ways for the student to participate in the program.

Councilmember Cathey asked whether the program has been able to solicit other major donors for the program. Ms. Lathrop said the program was able to secure several large grants from the Department of Commerce and through Building Changes through 2025.

Mayor Sullivan and the Council thanked Ms. Lathrop for the update on the program and for her efforts.

**DISCUSSION OF
PARK NAMING
PROCESS:**

Director Denney briefed the Council on the City's current park naming process. The naming process also includes public participation and receiving input from the community. The recent naming of Kindred Park at the Preserve subdivision included mailing information to the region and the Preserve neighborhood and adjacent neighborhoods in addition to social

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media and Facebook posts.

Following collection of park name suggestions from the community, Director Denney reviews the recommendations to ensure names are appropriate. The names are forwarded for review and a recommendation by the Parks and Recreation Commission. The Council considers the recommendation and can either accept the recommendation, request the Commission consider another name, or the Council can offer a new name.

The last process generated some discussion in terms of the process for Kindred Park in the Preserve neighborhood. Director Denney requested feedback and suggestions on any changes in the naming process. During the last several park naming processes, the City delayed naming the park until the park was completed, which can lead to some confusion in the community as the park is often referred to as another name prior to construction. The “T” Street park is a good example as the park carried that name for many prior to construction of the park. Following completion of the park, the park was renamed to Deschutes Valley Park. He recommended initiating the naming process for parks prior to construction and completion of new parks.

Councilmember Jefferson supported engaging with local tribes during the naming process. Director Denney said direct contact could be easily pursued. A member of the Parks and Recreation Commission is a member of the Nisqually Indian Tribe. However, staff is able to outreach to each tribe during each naming process.

Mayor Sullivan said she is acquainted with several tribal members who live within the City who could also be involved in the naming process.

Councilmember Cathey commented that although there is nothing inherently wrong with the park naming process, she believes the last naming process for Kindred Park at the Preserve was not successful. She believes the name is not representative of the City’s process. The Council should have returned the naming suggestion to the Commission as the community is unfamiliar with the name. Park naming procedures have been successful in the past but the previous process was unsuccessful.

Councilmember Jefferson questioned the prohibition of naming a park if the person is living. Director Denney explained that when the policy was developed, staff reviewed other policies from other jurisdictions. Naming a park after a person who had been deceased acknowledged the value of the person’s service over time. However, following adoption of the naming process, the Council approved naming a park, Jim Brown Park. Mr. Brown was alive at that time.

Councilmember Cathey commented that the preference for naming a park is

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for someone who has some historical significance and/or the cultural/geographical area of the park. For example, Isabella Bush Park was named after her because she was a pioneer farmer and the name represents the park, which is the site of the Tumwater FRESH Farm.

Director Denney pointed out that the Kindred family financially sponsored the trip by the Bush-Simmons party to Tumwater, which was discussed by the Parks and Recreation Commission. The Kindred family also housed the area's first school in their home.

Mayor Sullivan supported pursuing the park naming process prior to construction and completion of any park.

Director Denney said staff has completed an extensive public process for the master planning of the park at the former Tails End Arena site. Prior to moving forward on construction of the site, staff will initiate a park naming process for the new facility.

**MAYOR/CITY
ADMINISTRATOR'S
REPORT:**

City Administrator Parks reported Water Resources and Sustainability staff member Grant Gilmore recently collaborated with the Tumwater School District and the Pacific Education Institute to support the school district's forest and streams summer ecology field course. The course hosted 16 high school students, which included 180 hours of exposure to forest management practices for mapping, stream preservation, restoration, and wetland delineation. The program was initiated based on an objective within Tumwater's Urban Forestry Management Plan to maintain a community and urban forestry education program. The students earned hands-on science experience in natural resources and a biology lab credit. Students also had the opportunity to network with professionals within the industry and each student received a \$1,800 stipend. On Friday, July 28, 2023, the students are presenting their projects at 11 a.m. at New Market Skills Center. She encouraged the Council to contact Director Smith if they are interested in attending the event.

The state recently declared a statewide drought advisory across the state. In Thurston County, local jurisdictions have not been upgraded to an emergency status that has affected 12 other counties. Water Resources staff continue to monitor daily production and consumption recognizing water levels in the aquifer are lower than normal this time of year because of the lack of rainfall. City Administrator Parks encouraged everyone to conserve water and check for leaks. If conditions change, staff will review the Water Shortage Response Plan and follow up with appropriate actions as necessary.

The Israel Road Water Main project is scheduled to begin next week and will be completed at the end of October. Some interruptions will be required along transportation corridors over the next several months. The

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pavement maintenance program is progressing well. The closure of the I-5 ramp netted better results than anticipated.

Mayor Sullivan reminded the Council of the next meeting on July 31, 2023 because of the primary election on August 1, 2023. National Night Out will also be celebrated on July 31, 2023. At least 18 different neighborhood events have been scheduled. The City will publish all event locations.

Councilmember Cathey asked whether the water shortage affects any commitments to new development. Director Smith said no commitments to customers would be affected unless actions in the Water Shortage Response Plan are implemented, such as curtailing non-essential irrigation. Staff continues to monitor water usage daily. The City has not reached any trigger points that would require warning notices. Should the City reach any of the peak limits of the City's capacity to serve customers, staff would contact internal customers (City) to seek ways to save water through irrigation followed by contacting the school district and commercial customers.

Director Smith reviewed the City's water capacity to serve existing and future customers, efforts to develop supplies to ensure water capacity, and redundancy systems in place to serve customers and respond to future drought conditions.

Councilmember Cathey asked whether recent state requirements for clearance of trees and vegetation around structures to reduce fire risk pertains to the county's exemption of an emergency declaration. City Administrator Parks explained that the statewide drought advisory has affected 12 counties. The advisory in those counties was upgraded to an emergency status as most of the counties are located in Eastern Washington and have experienced serious drought conditions. The City maximizes the efficiency of existing sources, seeks opportunities to conserve water, and continue to search for new sources of water. The City continually relies on the Comprehensive Water System Plan, which projects future growth and includes estimates for future need based on land use identified for the urban growth area. As developments occur, water use is approved in the context of future planning.

ADJOURNMENT: **With there being no further business, Mayor Sullivan adjourned the meeting at 6:52 p.m.**