

City of Port Orchard Annual Report



Annual Report To The Citizens

If the City were a sports team, you would classify 2008 as what's known as a "Rebuilding Year." Coming into office, there were a number of significant challenges facing the City that were left unaddressed by the previous administration — some of which quite frankly, were very surprising to find. Before it was possible to begin truly moving the City forward, these challenges had to be met and overcome. Here's an update on what was accomplished in 2008, setting the stage for real progress in 2009.

Comprehensive Plan Updated: Bringing the City's Comprehensive Plan into compliance with the state's Growth Management Act (GMA) was undoubtedly the single most significant challenge the City faced,



James Weaver

The City was four years out of compliance with state law when I took office. There was no previous work being done by the Planning Department to bring us into compliance with the GMA that we could find, or that anyone in that department was aware of. Bringing Port Orchard into compliance with the law by the end of 2008 immediately became my *Number One* priority. In addition to violating the law, non-compliance had locked us out of the opportunity to compete for millions of dollars in grant money during that time.

The update to the Comp Plan that was required wasn't just an ordinary one either, it was the legally mandated 10-year update — a major undertaking. A 10-year Comp Plan update is about an 18-month process that usually involves engaging several consultants, with fees exceeding \$200,000 not at all unusual. Therefore, I'm extremely proud to report that our plan was submitted to the State before year-end, and was done almost entirely in-house by our talented staff. This saved the City approximately \$170,000.

Although Bremerton has appealed specific parts of the plan related to SKIA, we believe we will prevail when the Growth Management Hearings Board rules in August. Until then, the plan is considered valid and in compliance with state law. In the unlikely event Bremerton's appeal is upheld, *only* the narrow portion that was appealed will be remanded back to the City, while the rest of the plan will remain in compliance.

A special "Kudos" is in order for City Development Director James Weaver and his dedicated staff, for hitting the long ball to accomplish our top goal for 2008.

Crime Down In The City: One of my main campaign promises was improving Public Safety and reducing Violent Crime — much of which is often related to drug activity. Although property crimes like theft are up slightly, this is a nationwide trend attributed to the current state of the economy. However, Police Chief Al Townsend reports *preliminary figures indicate Violent Crimes in our City dropped 35 percent overall in 2008*. Violent Felony Assaults were down 49 percent, and Sexual Assaults were down 17 percent. A tip of the hat is in order for the good work of our Police Department, because we won't even get close to making the statewide Violent Crime Top 10 List for cities our size — where we ranked sixth in the state, when I took office.

We are also pro-active in using the zoning code to reduce crime. We shut down an illegal boarding house where several registered sex offenders lived — within sight of a day care. The code was also used to prevent a drug and alcohol addiction program from inappropriately locating an intake center in the downtown retail district on Bay Street.



Police Chief Al Townsend

Planning and Permitting Department Reorganized

This department was a major bottleneck for companies and individuals wanting to do business in our city. That department was completely overhauled under the direction of James Weaver, whom I specifically recruited for the director position, and is now called the City Development Department. Previously, it was not at all unusual for the simplest permits, licenses and rezones to take literally more than a year to process. We've cleared the entire backlog of 517 pending applications that were outstanding when we took office. Some of these had been in process for more than two years, and at least one for five years. I'm very proud to say that Port Orchard now has the fastest permitting and approval time in the county.

2009 City Budget Approved: These are turbulent economic times, and government faces many of the same financial pressures as the private sector. However, because of the City's conservative financial management, Port Orchard did not lay off or furlough any City employees, cut services to our citizens, or forego any major capital projects as some other local cities have been forced to.

The City is funded primarily by sales tax revenue (not property taxes as many people believe) and quite frankly, because of the downturn in the economy, sales tax collections are down. In response to that there have been a number of budget cuts, most notably travel and equipment purchases, but every department has responded by tightening its belt, understanding it's necessary to do more with less. And unlike some other local cities, we're also pleased to note that Port Orchard is still open for business five days a week.

Council Study Sessions Established

Another campaign promise was to streamline the cumbersome Council Committee system and establish study sessions. The number of Council committees has been reduced from seven to four — Finance, Tourism & Events, Utilities and Public Property. While no City business is transacted, the full council now meets to discuss issues at regularly scheduled study sessions. This has had the positive impact of eliminating the lengthy discussions which took previous Council meetings late into the evening. These are open to the public, and held on the third Tuesday of every month, at 7 p.m.

Annexation and Economic Development: The City Council has established growth and economic development via annexation as its top goal for 2009. To that end, the McCormick Woods Annexation Committee, which began its work in 2008, has collected enough signatures to exceed the required 75 percent of assessed valuation. The McCormick annexation will be on the March 24 City Council agenda for approval.

Annexation of the Sedgwick and Bethel area, which also began in 2008 and includes Fred Meyer, was approved on Feb. 9, and is awaiting final Boundary Review Board approval, but should officially become part of the City shortly as well.



Both the Sedgwick and Bethel Road area, which includes Fred Meyer, along with McCormick Woods, should become part of the City, just shortly

Work on the eventual annexation of the entire Bethel Avenue Corridor, which also began in 2008, should be complete before the end of this year. Negotiations with Kitsap County over transitioning Bethel are underway. These two major commercial annexations will ease the City's financial situation considerably because of the additional sales tax revenue those primarily retail areas will contribute.

Parking Garage Site Selected

Unless the downtown parking situation is remedied, efforts to revitalize downtown will continue to be handicapped. Understanding that, and after almost two years of public process, the City Council has selected the Prospect Street site as the location of a new, City-owned parking garage. The garage will be a two-story, underground structure capable of holding around 400 cars. Other than entrances and exits from Bay Street at Frederick, and Prospect Street, across from City Hall, the garage won't otherwise be visible. Plans call for constructing a brand new, Craftsman-style building over the garage on the Prospect Street level, to house a community meeting center, and an expanded Library, which will move from its current site. The City is currently exploring funding options for the project.

Phase One of Bay Street Undergrounding Completed: All the conduits necessary for electric, telecommunications, traffic control, and all other utilities servicing Bay Street are now in the ground, the new traffic light poles are in place and the signals operational. All overhead utility lines will eventually be rerouted underground. Since Bay Street is a state highway — not a City street — the delays in completing the concrete bulldouts at the ends of the sidewalks, and completing the crosswalks, were beyond the City's control.



Mark Dorsey

Sinkhole Project Complete

The Bethel Avenue Sinkhole project is *finally* complete. It was delayed by FEMA issues, and then discovery of previously unknown underground storage tanks. Special recognition is in order for City Engineer/Public Works Director Mark Dorsey and his dedicated Public Works crew for overseeing the project, and the Bay Street undergrounding simultaneously — as well as for the great work they did keeping our City streets clear during the December snowfall — in spite of losing a snow plow and dump truck. Their dedication earned the entire Public Works crew recognition as the Employees of the Quarter for Q4.

City Web Site Updated

The City's Web site was completely rebuilt in 2008 and is now easier for citizens to access via a simplified Web address (www.cityofportorchard.us). City departments can post information in a more timely manner and change it quickly as conditions dictate. Video of the City Council meetings will be posted on the site, and it is now possible to communicate directly with the City and with individual Council members via email. You may also choose to receive updates such as this newsletter electronically by simply signing up on the site.

Stormwater Utility Established: The City now has a new Stormwater Utility. Finalized in 2008, this is a *federal (unfunded) mandate* that requires the City to establish an environmental utility to mitigate the stormwater runoff into Puget Sound. This utility should have been up and running before we took office, and although delayed by the previous administration, it will be fully operational this year.

Additional Public Comment Period Added to Council Agenda

Previously, there was a public comment period about halfway through the City Council meeting agenda. That has been moved to the very first item of business. An additional comment period has been added to the very end of the meeting agenda so citizens can comment on actions taken during that meeting if they desire — or on anything else. The changes mean citizens are now heard first — and get the last word.

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