



## Neighborhood Meeting with City Council

### Highlands Neighborhood

Submitted Questions/Comments (13)

Meeting Date: November 18, 2009



### Budget and finance: Mayor Jim Lauinger

1. What is the status of neighborhood matching grant funds?

**Response:** *The Neighborhood Matching Grant Program was one of the programs identified by the City Council to receive cuts if Proposition 1/Kirkland Utility Tax was rejected (proposed 1.5 percent tax rate increase on electrical energy, natural gas, and telephone services). The measure failed which means the grants will be reduced from \$3,500 to \$615 per year per neighborhood in 2010. The grant application process has started for these grants with the submittal deadline of December 7, 2009.*

2. Sales tax is too volatile for the City budget. Is the City doing anything to encourage the State to adopt alternative taxing mechanisms (like an income tax)? What can citizens do to further this cause?

**Response:** *Sales tax is an unstable revenue source within the City budget. Revenues decreased by 20 percent in 2009 from 2008. The reliance of our State's revenue structure on sales tax has been an on-going topic of discussion in the State Legislature. A Bill to establish a State income tax was introduced during the 2009 Legislative Session (SB 5104) although there is a question if the Washington State Constitution would allow a state income tax. Along with the Association of Washington Cities, the City of Kirkland has supported flexibility of existing revenues (use of Real Estate Excise Tax to maintain existing parks) and has encouraged new revenues for specific purposes (e.g. fee per barrel of oil to support surface water programs) but we have yet to be successful. The Highlands neighborhood is in the 45th Legislative District and is represented by:*

- Senator Eric Oemig—(360) 786-7672
- Representative Roger Goodman—(360) 786-7878 or (425) 739-1810
- Representative Larry Springer—(360) 786-7822 or (425) 739-1806

*Additional contact information and links to email Legislators can be found on the Legislature's website:*

*[www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov).*

3. What is the status of the City's budget? Now that the utility tax vote is in, how will the City balance the budget? What cuts will be made? How can citizens help fill the gaps, perhaps through expanded volunteer opportunities?

**Response:** *As of November 12, 2009, the City's budget is expected to fall short of adopted levels by approximately \$13.1 million, which includes the \$2.24 million revenue loss due to the failure of the voted private utility tax rate increase. The reductions associated with the failure of the utility tax vote are summarized on the City's website at: <http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us/budget>. To balance the 2009–2010 budget, the City Council has taken a variety of actions including expenditure and service reductions, increasing revenue, and using reserves. At its November 12 meeting, the City Council was presented with other recommendations. A summary of the causes of the shortfall and the recommended strategies to re-balance the budget are summarized in the packet for the budget Special Study Session, available at: <http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us/depart/council/Aqendas/aqenda111209.htm>.*

4. Exactly what happened to the \$12 million that the City thought it had? Who is responsible and what is going to done to recoup the money?

**Response:** *The anticipated shortfall from the City's adopted 2009–2010 budget is primarily driven by declines in City revenues in several categories:*

- *It is the City's practice to budget sales tax revenues at the level received in the prior year. The 2009–2010 revenues were budgeted consistent with 2008 receipts, but actual revenues have fallen short of projections by 20 percent. This results in a revenue reduction for the two-year period of \$5.4 million.*
- *With the failure of the voted private utility tax increase, \$2.24 million in utility tax revenue is removed from the 2010 budget. In addition, revenues from the existing utility tax have declined \$2.5 million due to changes in consumer habits (reducing telecommunications and cable tax revenues that had been growing in past years) and rate decreases that were not planned by the private utilities in 2008 when the budget was adopted (most notably, a 17 percent reduction in natural gas rates versus the previously projected 5 percent increase).*
- *The City restructured its business license fee to be a charge based on the number of full-time equivalent employees (FTEs). The budget projections were based on 2008 actual employee counts; however, due to increased unemployment and more refined FTE calculations by businesses, revenues are projected to fall short of budgeted levels by \$1.3 million during the biennium.*

*As indicated in the response to the prior question, the City Council was presented with recommendations to re-balance the budget at the November 12, 2009 Budget Special Study Session. The packet for the Study Session, available at: <http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us/depart/council/Agendas/agenda111209.htm>.*

5. In the past I would have voted for the Prop1 Utility Tax, almost without thinking about it. Since you decided to go forward with the municipal version of a subprime loan and annex land that you probably can't afford now and definitely won't be able to afford 10 years from now, I am finding it difficult to support new funding for you. Particularly since you made this decision against the wishes of the people you are supposed to represent.

**Response:** *With the failure of the voted increase to the private utility tax rate, the City will be reducing service levels in a variety of areas (specific details are provided on the City's website at: <http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us/budget>).*

*If the final result of the election is that the annexation passes, the City will develop its 2011–2012 budget recognizing the effective date selected by the City Council and the funds available from the State sales tax credit. As in all years, the City will adopt a balanced 2011–2012 budget, reflecting the level of service that can be supported from these resources.*

#### **Annexation: Deputy Mayor Joan McBride**

6. If the Annexation vote passed, what's next? If it didn't pass, what happens?

**Response:** *The results of the November 3<sup>rd</sup> General Election are scheduled to be certified on November 24. If the annexation measure passes by 60 percent or more, the City Council will pass an Ordinance at a future Council meeting setting the effective date of the annexation. If the measure does not pass by 60 percent or more, the City Council may discuss if they wish to accept the annexation without extending the existing debt to the area. Since the election results are not certified until November 24, the Council has not yet had this conversation. Visit the Annexation webpage at <http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us/annexation> to sign up for e-mail updates.*

## Parks: Councilmember Tom Hodgson

### 7. What is the status of the railroad trail?

**Response:** The Port of Seattle announced on November 6 that the Port, King County, Sound Transit, Puget Sound Energy (PSE) and Cascade Water Alliance (CWA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining future intentions related to purchase and future use of the 42-mile Eastside Rail corridor. The non-binding MOU provides the mechanism for the Port to complete the purchase of the corridor from BNSF, and the transaction is now scheduled to close on December 15.

Once the Port takes over ownership, the County and Sound Transit would then negotiate with the Port to acquire the segment between Renton and Woodinville (which includes the Kirkland segment) with PSE and CWA and intends to procure utility easements as part of the deal. The rail corridor will be preserved for dual transportation and recreation uses under the federal rail banking program. King County intends to develop a bike and walking path along portions of the corridor and Sound Transit has an interest in preserving the corridor for possible future high capacity transportation needs.

No specific timeline has been established for how/when redevelopment of the corridor will proceed. More information will likely be available in the months ahead. A multi-use trail within the corridor, referred to as the Cross Kirkland Trail, is one of Kirkland's highest priority non-motorized transportation projects and is identified in the City's Active Transportation Plan.

#### Resources:

- Port of Seattle website: <http://www.portseattle.org/business/realestate/eastsiderail.shtml>
- King County Council website: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/council/issues/corridor.aspx>
- City of Kirkland website: [http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us/depart/Public Works/Transportation Streets/Regional Transportation Planning/Eastside Rail Corridor.htm](http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us/depart/Public%20Works/Transportation%20Streets/Regional%20Transportation%20Planning/Eastside%20Rail%20Corridor.htm)

For more information, contact David Godfrey, Transportation Engineering Manager, Public Works Department at [dgodfrey@ci.kirkland.wa.us](mailto:dgodfrey@ci.kirkland.wa.us) or (425) 587-3865.

### 8. Can we make improvements to the railroad crossing by Cotton Hill Park for the junior high kids?

**Response:** At this point in time this crossing is still on private property (i.e. BNSF). Once ownership of the rail corridor is resolved, the City can investigate possible interim improvements to the crossing. The City's Active Transportation Plan identifies this location as an important east/west route for the City's bicycle and pedestrian trail network. However, funding for constructing any major improvements has not been secured at this time. For more information, contact Jason Filan, Park Maintenance and Operations Manager, Parks and Community Services Department at [jfilan@ci.kirkland.wa.us](mailto:jfilan@ci.kirkland.wa.us) or (425) 587-3341.

## Public safety and crime: Councilmember Dave Asher

### 9. Are crime rates rising? What can citizens do?

**Response:** While there have been slight increases in some crime categories such as identity theft, there are reductions in other crimes, such as auto theft and car prowls. It is important to remember that due to Kirkland's relatively low instances of violent crime, any percentage of change will seem significant. For instance our statistics reflect a 75 percent increase in aggravated assaults resulting from bar fights. This percentage of increase may seem alarming at first glance, but closer examination revealed that in 2007 four such instances and in 2008 there were seven instances for the entire City of Kirkland. The City of Kirkland continues to be a safe place to live and the safety of our community remains our top priority.

### **How can citizens help?**

As a citizen, it is important to work in partnership with your community, neighborhood, and police department. A strong sense of "neighborhood" is a powerful tool in fighting crime. The Police Department encourages you to become involved and get to know your neighbors. A closely knit neighborhood can become the eyes and ears for the police, maximizing their ability to provide for your safety. For more information, contact Officer Allan O'Neill, Neighborhood Resource Officer, at [aoneill@ci.kirkland.wa.us](mailto:aoneill@ci.kirkland.wa.us) or (425) 587-3451.

## **Planning and economic development: Councilmember Jessica Greenway**

10. What is the status of Parkplace redevelopment, opportunities for citizen input, and timeline for completion?

**Response:** The Parkplace project is now going through a design review process. The applicant is preparing designs for each of the proposed buildings and open spaces on the site. The City's Design Review Board (DRB) has the authority to approve these designs in accordance with design guidelines adopted by the City Council. Because this is a large and complex project, the process has involved several meetings to date and is likely to take several more. The DRB met on Monday, November 16 and the project may be discussed at future meetings. Once the Board has completed its review and if it issues an approval, the applicant may proceed to submit building permit applications. Given the state of the economy, permit application may not happen for some time. For more information, contact Angela Ruggeri, Senior Planner, Planning and Community Development at [aruggeri@ci.kirkland.wa.us](mailto:aruggeri@ci.kirkland.wa.us) or (425) 587-3256.

11. What is the status of downtown redevelopments and timeline for completion?

**Response:** In addition to Parkplace discussed above, there are currently four notable developments in the downtown. The most significant is construction of a mixed use project on the corner of Lake Street and Kirkland Avenue. The project will have ground floor commercial uses including the Bank of America (which has temporarily moved to the east) and sixty six upper level senior housing units within four stories above the commercial. A large pedestrian plaza will be located on the corner. For more information, contact Janice Soloff, Senior Planner, Planning and Community Development at [jsoloff@ci.kirkland.wa.us](mailto:jsoloff@ci.kirkland.wa.us) or (425) 587-3257.

Another much smaller project is under construction on Central Way just east of 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. The project has three stories with a retail space on the ground floor and residential or offices on the floors above. For more information, contact Susan Greene, Planner, Planning and Community Development at [sgreene@ci.kirkland.wa.us](mailto:sgreene@ci.kirkland.wa.us) or (425) 587-3252.

Building permits were recently submitted to remodel a small building located on the south side of Central Way adjacent to Marina Park. For more information, contact Tony Leavitt, Associate Planner, Planning and Community Development at [tlevitt@ci.kirkland.wa.us](mailto:tlevitt@ci.kirkland.wa.us) or (425) 587-3253.

A larger redevelopment project was recently approved by the Design Review Board on the east side of Lake Street in the vicinity of Hectors restaurant. The project will leave in place the older portion of the Hectors building as well as the portion of the Waterfront Market building that extends along Lake Street to the intersection with 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South. The existing buildings in between those buildings will be torn down as will the portion of the Waterfront Market building that now houses the Calabria restaurant. Calabria will be relocated to another part of the building. Between Hectors and the Waterfront Market will be a new two- and three-story building. Surface parking for the development will remain at the back of the site. Building permits for this project are expected to be soon. For more information, contact Jon Regala, Senior Planner, Planning and Community Development at [jregala@ci.kirkland.wa.us](mailto:jregala@ci.kirkland.wa.us) or (425) 587-3255.

## Miscellaneous

12. I live in the Highlands neighborhood on a hilly street on 114th Place NE. I realize that we live in a challenging location for snow and ice and we prepare for it by parking uphill. My complaint is not about the snow response per se but the aftermath. I don't expect the neighborhood streets to be plowed or sanded during the midst of the snow; however, the aftermath response was critical for this storm. Our street as well as the segment of 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE which is designated as a Priority 1 snow route street was never plowed north of NE 100th Street.

I called the non-emergency police number three times over the weekend to ask for a plow to no avail. I was told that the plows were not running on the weekend! This is a public safety issue and that is why I have included Police and Fire on this email. Fortunately, we did not have any emergency over the weekend that required police or fire. If we did then we would likely have slow response and the possibility that services could not make it to us. This scenario is acceptable and understandable to me during the storm because most of the city would be in the same condition. It's a fairness issue. On Friday most main streets were clear and had a huge advantage with respect to public services-police, fire, mail, FedEx, etc. Neighborhoods like ours still had cars stuck and abandoned until Sunday. We were unable to make it up our hill until Sunday only after many hours of breaking ice and shoveling snow on our street. We have clear ruts to drive in but still a lot of ice and snow on our street as of this morning.

I would like the city to:

- a. Make a better effort to clear priority 1 snow routes
- b. Plow neighborhood streets once the ones with more priority are clear

I look forward to coming home this evening to a street that has been plowed. I am also interested in finding out if our neighborhood can solicit a private plow for the city street or whether a special permit is required.

**Response:** *The snow storms of December 2008 were beyond the capacity of every city in the region. Fifteen consecutive days of snow is out of the ordinary for our part of the country. Although we strive to do our best and our crews were working around the clock (including the holidays), some inconveniences were unfortunately inevitable. We apologize for the inconveniences you may have experienced on your particular street.*

*Major arterials, bus routes, and roadways that lead to schools, police and fire stations, freeway interchanges and Evergreen Hospital are "Priority 1" streets. In reference to the Highlands Neighborhood, all of 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue is on our first priority route and 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue is on the second priority route. The City has added the steep hill portion of NE 104<sup>th</sup> Street to its closure list.*

*Even with our budget shortfall where public works has reduced \$3 million from its general fund allocation, the City has purchased three small plows and a de-icer for a more comprehensive snow response in the future. We appreciate the patience and cooperation on the part of the public and will continue to do our very best. For winter preparedness information, go to <http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us/prepare>.*

13. Pedestrians walking east on NE 87th to 116th Ave NE on the south side of the street encounter a dangerous stretch of the path/walkway/sidewalk where their path has to negotiate on the edge of the roadway next to heavy brush and foliage. If there are cars at the same point, travelling at opposite directions, there is no room for the pedestrian. It's a situation for an accident waiting to happen. Can this area be cleared?

**Response:** *Yes. We will contact the property owner and make sure they trim the area. For more information, contact Noel Schoneman, NTCP Coordinator, Public Works at [nschoneman@ci.kirkland.wa.us](mailto:nschoneman@ci.kirkland.wa.us) or (425) 587-3870.*