



CITY OF KIRKLAND
Department of Parks & Community Services
505 Market Street, Suite A, Kirkland, WA 98033 425.587.3300
www.ci.kirkland.wa.us

MEMORANDUM

To: David Ramsay, City Manager

From: Jennifer Schroder, Director
Michael Cogle, Park Planning and Development Manager

Date: September 14, 2009

Subject: Draft Response Letter to Jette A. Townsend Regarding Juanita Bay Park Volunteer Ranger Program

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Council authorize Mayor Lauinger to sign the attached response letter to Jette A. Townsend.

BACKGROUND DISCUSSION:

Ms. Townsend is a volunteer with the Juanita Bay Park Volunteer Ranger Program and in her letter urges continuation of funding for the program and for the Park Project Coordinator staff position.

RECEIVED

City of Kirkland

SEP 08 2009

CITY OF KIRKLAND
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

Jette A. Townsend
521 Alexander Avenue
Kirkland, WA 98033
Ph. 425 - 827 2610
Sept. 3rd 2009

James Lauinger, Mayor
123 Fifth Avenue
Kirkland, WA 98033

Dear Mayor James Lauinger,

I attended the August 4th, 2009 Kirkland City Council Meeting. I left that evening impressed by the varied talents, opinions and obvious dedication of the City Council for the fiscal responsibility of the City of Kirkland. Though I was present primarily to support the Juanita Bay Park Volunteer Ranger Program and Teresa Sollitto, I also had an opportunity to hear citizens representing various concerns: the Seniors Program, Kirkland Performance Center, Assessments, Annexations, etc. It became readily evident that as Mayor and City Council for Kirkland your demands and overview must encompass all aspects that impact our fair city. In advance, I thank you for your time and attention to the letter I humbly submit as part of your review when making difficult decisions regarding the Juanita Bay Park Ranger Volunteer Program and the position held by Teresa Sollitto.

In January of 1999 we moved from a remote island in the San Juan Islands to Kirkland. Desperate for nature in my new urban environment I happily found Juanita Bay Park and blessed former City Council members who had had the foresight to envision the value of turning a 25 cent golf course into a thriving natural wetland with homes for numerous mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds. From that day on I visited the Park 2 -3 times a week always finding it altered and offering new opportunities for birding, observing beavers and other creatures, changes in foliage and the seasons.

Whenever I had visitors; local, Canadian or international JBP was a must see highlight. On one summer day that year in the Park with my sister, her daughter and an extremely energetic six year old son, we met JBP Ranger Bonnie Burns. With her personal magic and captivating facts, Bonnie not only engaged the young boy's imagination but left him with knowledge about beavers and an appreciation for the Park that has not diminished through the past 9 years. A trip to JBP remains on the itinerary whenever my now 15 year old nephew pays a visit to Kirkland.

Touched by the Park and the difference Volunteer Rangers made, I joined the JBP group in 2000. As a former educator, I saw being a Ranger at JBP as a way to give back to some of the former volunteers I had encountered and also an opportunity to touch the young future custodian of nature.

Shortly after I became a volunteer, Teresa Sollitto was made Parks Project Coordinator with one of her duties being to oversee the JBP Ranger Volunteer Program. In the nine years I have participated in the Program, Teresa Sollitto, as our supervisor has provided the opportunity for an eclectic, maverick, passionate and gifted group of individuals to share their skills, experiences and unique talents in partnership with Kirkland City. Under Teresa's leadership I was introduced and orientated regarding all aspects of my volunteer assignment including responsibilities. I have consistently received training and ongoing support and recognition for services provided. Beyond these and always adhering with the professional standard required to be upheld in order to maintain the city's reputation of integrity, professionalism and trust – Teresa has exuded the highest form of leadership by her example and role modeling. Her enthusiasm as a life long learner resulted in a wide variety of learning experiences at our Ranger meetings with guest speakers and experts on:

Native plants, non-native invasive plants, bats, birds, the history of the Lake Washington watershed, watershed ecology, salmon studies, King County Interpretive Program techniques, amphibians, urban wildlife, ecology, entomology, wetland ecology, fisheries and environment restoration, herpetology, education and outreach for land conservancy and restoration, backyard wildlife sanctuaries, landscaping for wildlife, Kirkland city work projects to restore city streams and protect water quality and the Kirkland city projects for JBP habitat restoration.

The Juanita Bay Park Ranger Quarterly Newsletters produced by Teresa with assistance from the Kirkland media staff is another example of how adept she has become at honoring and utilizing the individual expertise, interests and photographic gifts of Rangers. The pages within the Newsletters I have accumulated since 2000 bear witness to the far reaching impact the volunteer program has had on the community as well as conveys the learning and growth opportunities for volunteers making them better ambassadors for JBP and the City of Kirkland.

Perhaps most essential is Teresa Sollitto's ability to communicate with the Juanita Bay Park Rangers. Teresa has mastered how to provide the glue needed for the unique volunteer opportunity at Juanita Bay Park. As Rangers, most of the time we work alone; only when leading tours might we encounter one another. As our coordinator, Teresa, through emails keeps us abreast of developments and things impacting the Park as well as our fellow rangers. Her availability to answer questions that sporadically arise is welcoming and keeps Juanita Bay Park Rangers, well informed stewards for the Park, accurate with the information disseminated to the public and well versed representatives for the City of Kirkland.

Juanita Bay Park has and continues to be a large part of my enjoyment of residing in Kirkland. The sense of community within those visiting the park has always been evident as has their appreciation for the Volunteer Ranger Program.

As a taxpaying resident, as a mother, aunt, former educator and as a JBP Volunteer Ranger – invested in the stewardship of nature for generations to come, I ask you to

consider cutting any frills ie. appreciation dinners, gifts, etc. from all the volunteer programs in Kirkland before you consider cutting the JBP Program and said Program's Coordinator, Teresa Sollitto. Cutting off funding and the coordinator would if not immediately within time jeopardize the continuity and longevity of the Ranger Program at the level it currently operates.

Should all other attempts to save the JBP Volunteer Ranger Program fail, I hope the City of Kirkland would still find some way to keep a person as professional, loyal and dedicated as Teresa Sollitto.

I am aware of the Utility Tax Ballot Measure for the City of Kirkland that residents will vote on in early November and support the passage of this measure.

Thank you for your time, dedication and the valuable service you contribute to the City of Kirkland.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jette A. Townsend". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Jette A. Townsend

October 7, 2009

D R A F T

Jette A. Townsend
521 Alexander Avenue
Kirkland, Washington 98933

Dear Ms. Townsend:

Thank you for your letter dated September 3, 2009 regarding the Juanita Bay Park Volunteer Ranger Program and Teresa Sollitto, Park Project Coordinator for the Parks and Community Services Department.

As you noted, funding for the Ranger Program and the Park Project Coordinator position has been identified for elimination in 2010 due to the City's on-going budget challenges. The City Council has had to make some extremely difficult decisions in order to ensure a balanced budget for next year and beyond, and unfortunately many established City programs and services may be eliminated or reduced. As you are aware, Kirkland residents will have the opportunity in November to vote whether or not to approve a proposed private utility tax rate increase, which would help to preserve these programs.

We appreciate your thoughtful comments about the program and your kind words regarding Ms. Sollitto. We would also like to acknowledge and thank you for your many years of volunteerism at Juanita Bay Park. The success of the park as an urban wildlife area and its enjoyment by thousands of visitors each year is due in no small part to the efforts of dedicated volunteer park rangers like you.

If you need further information please feel free to contact Jennifer Schroder, Director of Parks and Community Services, at (425) 587-3301 or via email at jschroder@ci.kirkland.wa.us.

Sincerely,
Kirkland City Council

By: James L. Lauinger, Mayor