

**TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION**  
**MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING**  
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**CONVENE:** 6:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Mayor Pro Tem Mayor Leatta Dahlhoff and Councilmembers Peter Agabi, Michael Althausen, Joan Cathey, Eileen Swarthout, and Kelly Von Holtz.

Excused: Mayor Debbie Sullivan and Councilmember Angela Jefferson.

Staff: City Administrator Lisa Parks, City Attorney Karen Kirkpatrick, Assistant City Administrator Kelly Adams, Finance Department Director Troy Niemeyer, Fire Chief Brian Hurley, Community Development Department Director Brad Medrud, Parks and Recreation Department Director Chuck Denney, IT Department Director Lance Inman, Water Resources and Sustainability Department Director Dan Smith, and Deputy City Clerk Tracie Core.

**COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS: PRELIMINARY BRIEFING:** City Administrator Parks reported the Community Engagement Survey has generated 227 responses to date. The survey is open until midnight on June 20, 2025. The presentation will focus only on the results of the first survey, a statistically valid survey.

Kara Krnacik, Project Manager, DHM Research, and David Phan, Lead Analyst, DHM Research, introduced themselves.

Ms. Krnacik said the purpose of the surveys was to assess community sentiments about key issues facing the City of Tumwater and to help inform the Strategic Plan by analyzing how the community prioritizes key City services as well as the community's satisfaction of those services. A final component of the survey was creating a baseline of community opinions across topics and issues for future assessment and comparison.

Two separate surveys are part of the project. The first is the Statistically Valid Survey conducted from May 3-17, 2025. The survey was conducted on a random sample of Tumwater residents with quotas for age, gender, race/ethnicity, education level, and income to ensure a representative sample of Tumwater residents. Three hundred residents completed the survey representing a very good result for statistically valid surveys. The margin of error for the survey for all results is plus or minus 5.7%.

The Community Engagement Survey is the same survey distributed throughout the community through different methods. Contrary to the Statistically Valid Survey, survey respondents are those most likely to engage with the City and may not be representative of the residents of the City of Tumwater. The survey provides the ability to compare the voices from people the City hears from the most with those of a representative sample of Tumwater. The results of the two surveys will be analyzed for similarities and differences in the final report.

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Mr. Phan reviewed the demographics of survey respondents. Quota targets were established based on the most current American Communities survey data estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Mr. Phan reviewed the outcome of survey questions. Most respondents rated the quality of life in Tumwater as positive with 50% rating the quality of life as “very good” and 45% rating it as “good.” The second question was, “What is the most important issue that you want City government officials to address.” The opened-end question response categories reflected transportation infrastructure - roads and highways as the most important issue (18%). Other top issues are homelessness, poverty (14%), and affordable housing (12%).

Councilmember Althausen noted that he was not surprised that the responses rated homelessness, poverty, and affordable as high, but it is noteworthy that the ratings were higher than anticipated.

Councilmember Cathey asked about the distinction between infrastructure and roads and highways. Mr. Phan said the responses would be documented in the final report. However, most responses related to transportation typically spoke to infrastructure as a common phrase that speaks to roads, highways, and conditions of roads, etc. Transportation infrastructure does not pertain to buildings or other public works facilities. Councilmember Cathey commented that based on conversations with residents, many tie infrastructure to expanding buildings both commercial and residential, the environment, and not necessarily about roads or bridges. Mr. Phan explained that the list of categories is extensive and that those types of responses were likely less mentioned.

Councilmember Agabi said he identifies with the understanding attributed to infrastructure. He is uncertain as to whether infrastructure speaks to environmental factors. Infrastructure pertains to roads and capital transportation projects. He noted the congestion experienced along the I-5 corridor even on Sundays can often cause delays of one to two hours. As a member of the Transportation Policy Board, the Board is responsible for planning for infrastructure. Future transportation plans call for the creation of an HOV lane from the border of Thurston County as it crosses into Pierce County on I-5 to Exit 107. He added that he is not surprised infrastructure was rated high.

Councilmember Von Holtz acknowledged the responses for homelessness, poverty, affordable housing, infrastructure, and roads as the City is beginning to experience it more than in the past. In terms of roads and infrastructure, congestion exists and it is not possible to build more infrastructure to solve the problem. Other modes of transportation should be explored to reduce time for commuting.

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Councilmember Swarthout inquired as to the other categories. She is also surprised about the response rate for affordable housing and homelessness; however, society has become much more aware of the problems as it is a topic of many conversations.

Mr. Phan replied that the final report would include a list of all categories.

Ms. Krnacik noted that the open-ended questions often generated multiple responses from respondents. Up to three topics were coded for each response.

Mr. Phan reported that the question on rating the City on the delivery of services efficiently generated a 67% excellent and good rating collectively followed by creating a community where people feel like they belong and keeping residents informed. Most responses favored a good response versus an excellent response. Overall, the main takeaway is that the responses reflect an “overall good” response. Other questions reflected responses of some improvement areas residents would like. Some responses reflected skepticism or lack of awareness.

Ms. Krnacik said one of the main purposes of the survey was to assist the Council prioritize key issues for the City as part of the strategic planning process. Respondents were asked to rank several issues by priority and satisfaction. The results were indexed to identify where the City is excelling and where residents feel that there is room for improvement. Many respondents feel positively about the City’s ability to deliver high quality drinking water, fire and emergency medical services, and police services. None of the results are surprising or out of the ordinary in terms of community surveys. Managing growth and development was an area many respondents believe needs improvement. The issue is common across the state as the state’s population is increasing and there will be fiction as communities continue to expand. Based on conversations with staff, Tumwater residents are very concerned and passionate about the conservation of the environment in the City. The conservation of the environment and managing growth and development are often in conflict and could be partially contributing to the lower satisfaction ranking by respondents.

In response to a comment from Mayor Pro Tem Dahlhoff about how many of the issues are threaded together while the survey tends to compartmentalize the issues, Ms. Krnacik explained that to identify the priorities of the residents, it is necessary to silo the questions into different categories; however, the final report can tie the issues together recognizing different responses across demographics. Often, responses to specific questions can follow along group lines, which identify areas where there may be tensions or differences of opinions.

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Councilmember Cathey shared that because of the current economic situation and uncertainties with the respect to the cost of goods and services, it has increased awareness of both poverty and homelessness as individuals and families experience higher costs that could threaten their food and housing security.

Councilmember Von Holtz commented on her surprise with respect to responses to areas to improve street construction and maintenance in light of the recent passage of the City's Transportation Benefit District overwhelming by residents.

Ms. Krnacik responded that most of the categories of questions in the survey generated responses depicting that over half of Tumwater residents were satisfied with the City's performance. The graph identifies strengths and potential areas to improve but it is not reflective of the vast majority of people who are satisfied with how the City is performing except for responding to homelessness despite 48% of the respondents indicating they are satisfied with the City's performance. Street construction and maintenance generated a favorable response rate of 66%.

Ms. Krnacik addressed questions about public safety. Respondents were asked whether they feel safe in the City of Tumwater. A majority of residents responded that they do feel safe. A follow-up question asked respondents what contributes to their feeling of safety. The question was open-ended with responses categorized into several different categories. Most of the common reasons why respondents feel safe in Tumwater are because of police presence and quick response times, low crime rate, and the sense of community. Fifteen percent of the respondents who responded to feeling safe in Tumwater also noted that they could feel safer. Approximately 8% or 25 of the respondents did not feel safe in Tumwater. The small sample size limits the ability to identify the differences in responses and draw conclusions from the results. Of those who identified as unsafe in Tumwater, they identified crime and homelessness as the top reasons.

Councilmember Agabi asked whether respondents were asked about any specific locations in the City they believe are unsafe. Ms. Krnacik said the question was not that specific but rather a general question of whether the respondent felt safe in Tumwater.

Ms. Krnacik reviewed responses to questions on fire and emergency medical services. Most of the respondents rated the City high in the delivery of those services. Approximately 94% of the respondents were confident that the City can respond effectively to emergencies.

Ms. Krnacik reported the survey included questions on conservation and protection of the environment. Respondent were asked to choose their top

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priority from a list. Respondents want the City to prioritize preservation efforts, specifically through construction permitting (28%); however, many respondents want the City to prioritize conservation of the environment with more focus on big picture conservation rather than more specific categories that were listed in the survey.

Other topics within the survey included the economy, growth and development, homelessness, and communications. More information will be provided on those topics in the full report, as well as the demographic analysis for all questions.

Next milestones for the project include completion of the Community Engagement Survey on June 20, 2025 followed by the delivery to the City of all analysis and data to include a full report that is top-lined and cross-tabbed for both surveys on July 9, 2025.

Councilmember Agabi asked whether data from the Community Engagement Survey would be considered statistically valid similar to the first survey. Ms. Krnacik said the surveys are different. The Statistically Valid Survey results are separate and considered complete for a random sample. The results of the Community Engagement Survey will not be added to the first survey. The full report will identify the results from the Community Engagement Survey compared against the Statistically Valid Survey. She described the definition and difference between the two surveys, as well as how the team will identify surveys completed more than once by an individual to manage duplicate submissions

Mayor Pro Tem Dahlhoff thanked the team for presenting preliminary information on the results of the Statistically Valid Survey.

**2025 COMPREHENSIVE  
PLAN PERIODIC  
UPDATE – HOUSING:**

Director Medrud reported that the briefing will cover the Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan and questions to the Council on goals, policies, and draft implementation actions.

The Growth Management Act requires cities and counties to plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all economic segments of the population. Housing in the City has been an ongoing Council priority for exploring opportunities for residents to have a range of housing options within their respective budgets that are both suitable and affordable. The briefing will include different types of housing options and how they relate to different income groups.

As of April 2025, the medium income for a two-person household in Thurston County was \$93,375 and a four-person household was \$116,688.

Director Medrud shared information on a household of four with an income earning less than \$35,000 a year and the type of workers in that

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category. This information supports work by staff to identify appropriate housing and meet the City’s housing targets. The information further breaks down when considering housing income categories for all households as well as for renters and owners. Approximately 10% of City residents are extremely low-income households. Additionally, many more residents have a household income of less than 80% of the area median income (AMI). For all households within the City of Tumwater that amount is approximately 39% with 61% of residents earning 80% or more of AMI. Differences are obvious when considering renters versus owners. Renters occupy a much greater portion of those households under 80% of AMI than those who own their property.

A variety of ways was available to determine “stress” for those residents who are attempting to remain in affordable housing. Staff considered a variety of measures. It is also important to note that not all categories are reflected equally, which spoke to the need for a variety of measures. Staff considered a measurement of cost burden for residents in the community.

Director Medrud shared information on the household income categories in Tumwater:

<b>Household Income Category</b>	<b>Percent of AMI</b>	<b>Equiv. Household Income for Family of Four</b>	<b>Typical jobs in Income Category</b>
Extremely Low-Income	0-30% AMI	Less than \$35,000	Farm Workers, Fast Food Workers, Fixed Incomes
Very Low-Income	30-50% AMI	\$35,000 to \$58,350	Childcare, Administrative Assistants, Landscaping
Low-Income	50-80% AMI	\$58,350 to \$93,350	Veterinary Technicians, Construction Workers, Truck Drivers, Social Workers
Moderate-Income	80-100% AMI	\$93,350 to \$116,688	Nurses, Plumbers
Moderate-Income	100-120% AMI	\$116,688 to \$140,025	Analysts, Teachers
Upper Income	>120% AMI	More than \$140,025	Lawyers, Managers

Director Medrud reviewed household income categories in 2021 in Tumwater for all households (renters and owners). The affordability index for median homebuyers reflects that for household incomes above \$100,000, housing in the community will be affordable; however, for those households making less than \$100,000, it is much more difficult to find affordable housing. That trend has been tracking since the beginning of

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2022. Information was provided on the other four main jurisdictions in the county. In 2021, Tumwater was closer to the City of Yelm in terms of housing affordability. However, all jurisdictions are experiencing less housing affordability at the end of 2024. The same information was assessed for median income renters. In 2014, Tumwater was the most affordable jurisdiction for renters. That source of the information is from the Real Estate Center at the University of Washington, which collects data on all jurisdictions across Washington for home ownership and rentals. The information appears to suggest that the City is not experiencing any issues in terms of affordability for renters. However, the trend has declined as Tumwater was the most affordable jurisdiction in 2014 but has declined to reflect a placement of second from the bottom above Olympia today.

Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) forecasted that Tumwater and its urban growth area would need to add 9,192 net new housing units between 2020 and 2045 to accommodate growth. The 9,192 net new housing units needed between 2020 and 2045 have been allocated to different income groups defined by AMI and a separate category for permanent supportive housing (PSH).

Director Medrud reviewed anticipated future housing needs in the categories of 0-30% AMI, 31-50% AMI, 51-80% AMI, 81-120% AMI, and above 120% AM. For the purposes of the Housing Element and demonstrating whether the City has sufficient housing capacity, The City does not need to plan for the category of AMI over 120%. The under 80% AMI is the largest income group in Tumwater. More housing will be required for households under 80% AMI. He reviewed data on the total number of units required in each AMI reflected as a graphic to provide a visual representative of the size of each category. Additionally, staff identified the types of housing needed and the level of support that will be required to meet the needs of the different income groups.

Director Medrud reported that the Land Capacity Analysis is a summary of the difference between the allocated housing need and the capacity for potential number of new dwelling units that could be built on a parcel based on zoning, development regulations, development trends, and market factors. The Land Capacity Analysis compared the allocated housing need for Tumwater and its urban growth area to its capacity for new housing. A positive number indicates a surplus in Tumwater's capacity for new housing units. As TRPC's Buildable Lands analysis was five years old, staff adjusted the information to account for the intervening five-year period to estimate actual land capacity of the City and its urban growth area. Positive numbers in the tables are indicative of a surplus in capacity for new housing units. Negative numbers reflect a lack of sufficient land capacity. He shared details of the Land Capacity Analysis

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for each AMI income level, zone categories serving those income levels, housing need, total capacity, and surplus or deficit of land capacity.

Councilmember Swarthout commented on the need to create generational wealth and how housing targeted to those with a lower AMI prevent home ownership, as most of the affordable housing are apartments. Director Medrud replied that within the U.S., single-family housing is the mechanism for generational wealth. However, in other countries, it is possible to own a unit within a duplex offering the opportunity to create generational wealth. The City needs to explore ways either as a City or with other jurisdictions, opportunities to expand the level of home ownership beyond traditional single-family homes. He offered that townhomes can be a mechanism for home ownership. The issue speaks to transitioning and exploring options to encourage home ownership.

Director Medrud reported the City is also required to determine its capacity for emergency housing. Emergency housing can include assistance to individuals in a homeless situation to temporary transitional housing for a limited period. The City has sufficient land capacity to satisfy the requirement.

Additionally, the Comprehensive Plan update identified local policies and regulations that result in racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion in housing. Staff identified draft implementation policies and regulations to address undoing any racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion in housing caused by local policies, plans, and actions. The results of the work have been incorporated into the policies, goals, and implementation actions within the draft Housing Element. A consultant assisted all cities in Thurston County in completing the review.

The Comprehensive Plan update identified areas that may be at a higher risk of displacement from market forces that occur due to zoning, development regulations, and capital investments. Staff is proposing some anti-displacement policies. In Tumwater, economic displacement was identified as the most prominent because much of the residential housing development occurring in the City is housing stock serving those with lower incomes who may be part of other racial groups. Staff was unable to identify specific areas within the City that should be of focus as the maps of housing in the City failed to identify specific areas. Staff recommends addressing the issue across the entire City.

Councilmember Cathey requested clarification as to the terminology of “displacement.” Director Medrud explained that actions forcing people who do not want to leave a home as “displacement.” Changes could include economics or a particular community no longer feeling safe and moving away. The City is required to identify ways of not burdening those residents with lower AMIs that would cause them to lose their housing in



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order to accommodate new growth. The analysis completed by the consultant identified some specific populations at risk of displacement. Across the spectrum, 30% of households that are cost-burdened revealed that 39% are residents with low income or extremely low income. The analysis informed the review of policies to reduce displacement risk. The study focused on mobile home communities because they tend to serve a particular income group. The focus addressed mobile home park residents, as well as considering increased efficiencies to develop accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Staff also added other options, such as increasing home ownership opportunities for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities through its involvement with the Black Homes Initiative. He noted that displacement also occurs to residents of mobile home parks who live on fixed incomes and can no longer afford their homes when changes occur either in rents or in ground leases.

Director Medrud reviewed the format of the Housing Element, which is similar to other elements within the Comprehensive Plan. Part 1 includes goals, policies, and actions spanning the 20-year planning horizon. Goals and policies form the basis for programs, regulations, and actions the Council will consider during the update process. Appendix A includes a draft of all implementation actions. Goals and policies frame how the City responds and addresses housing issues. Although, there are minimal changes to goals and policies since the last update in 2016, the implementation actions are from updated goals and policies and serve as the foundation of work programs. Part 2 of the element includes all technical information, such as the Land Capacity Analysis, Housing Needs Assessment, racial disparate impacts, inclusion, and displacement, and housing provisions. The appendices support the relevancy of the Housing Element, such as the analysis completed by TRPC for the housing allocation and Land Capacity Analysis, Housing Action Plan, and other information.

Director Medrud encouraged the Council to review the appendices as they address recent permit activity, funding public housing construction, homeless population and trends, projected housing needs, protection of existing housing stock, and information on regulatory barriers.

The Policy and Action tables are not listed in priority order. The tables include information on estimated start and completion dates, level of effort necessary to achieve an action, level of measurement on the effect of housing supply of a particular action or policy, and specific housing needs that are addressed.

Director Medrud reviewed a series of goals. The goals focus on improvements to equity, coordination between different elements, ways to promote more housing types to meet different needs, expanding the supply of permanent income restrictive affordable housing for both low income

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households, disabled households, seniors, and others, maintaining and improving existing housing stock through maintenance and improvements of existing housing stocks, reducing costs of ongoing maintenance on a regular basis to avoid large costly repairs, increasing the ease of households to access housing and stay housed, continuing to develop partnerships to improve implementation of housing strategies, supporting ways to increase affordable housing options, developing relationships with organizations that represent communities of color and disadvantaged groups within Tumwater, and identifying permanent sources of funding for low-income housing.

Councilmember Cathey inquired about the status of promoting cottage housing as it appears not to be promoted within the element. Director Medrud responded that the Council introduced cottage housing in 2018. At that time, the discussion was part of an effort to broaden the source of different housing types within the City. Cottage housing was one of many housing options that include ADUs and other middle housing types. Cottage housing has a specific niche as well as needs that speak to specific developers. Cottage housing units are independently owned while the community is held in common with parking and open space shared. Cottage housing is recognized as a housing type for middle housing. Staff is proposing expanding the allowances for cottage housing in the City. However, many local developers are electing not to develop cottage housing. Councilmember Cathey encouraged staff to broaden and promote cottage housing options. Director Medrud shared that Planner Smith-Erickson has been seeking opportunities for demonstration projects. Staff and a group from Burien discussed a mixed-use project that included a variety of housing types located on a transit line. A successful public/partnership in Burien resulted in the completion of the project. Following the conclusion of the periodic update of the Comprehensive Plan, staff plans to focus attention on similar opportunities to facilitate similar projects in the City.

Councilmember Agabi inquired as to how the City plans to prevent sprawl in the county if the City lacks sufficient space to construct more multifamily housing. Director Medrud responded that the Land Use Element proposes locations for higher intensity uses. High-density commercial and high intensity residential uses are focused within the core of the City beginning in the Brewery District and southward as those areas are near freeway access and transit services. In the outlying areas of the City, it is more difficult to concentrate high-density uses because of the lack of transit service. The City is meeting all goals for the prevention of rural sprawl as growth is occurring within the City. Rural areas in the county, such as resource lands for agriculture and forestry are protected and would not be the location of future City housing. Any type of development within the City includes concurrent planning for all infrastructure needs to support new development. Impact fees are often

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used to fund a larger project. Sometimes, a lag in infrastructure occurs when development occurs. All development must pay to offset impacts with the City eventually constructing infrastructure.

Mayor Pro Tem Dahlhoff commented that she resides within the southwest area of Tumwater, which is essentially a rural environment as she has both a well and septic system with no sidewalks and county roads not at City standards. Her neighborhood is located within the City limits of Tumwater and included within the Littlerock Road Subarea Plan. She asked how messaging and showcasing of the area could demonstrate that the area is within the City limits. Director Medrud cited the difficulty in the lapse of time in terms of what exists today versus 20 years ago. Many areas that were annexed have large lots, no sidewalks, and often lack infrastructure. Development of infrastructure is essentially a piecemeal process rather than a one-time process based on a series of development projects, annexations, and different types of development leading to disconnections in terms of the lack of sidewalks and other infrastructure. It is possible to showcase areas through a time lapse snapshot showing how the community has changed.

Councilmember Cathey commented on the lack of public transit serving one of the City's high schools. The goal of training young people to use transit is abhorrent if no transit service is available. Director Medrud commented on planned discussions with Intercity Transit staff on the City's draft Transportation Plan to stress the importance of what has identified as important to receive input on the thresholds the City needs to achieve for extending transit service to areas of the City lacking service. Transit service has been an ongoing conversation with Intercity Transit staff. However, there are many factors required to extend transit service that the City must achieve in terms of housing density along bus lines. A higher level of development was forecasted off Littlerock Road near Black Hills High School to assist in extending the bus connection. However, staff is unsure if that level of development will occur leading to a quandary of meeting the needs of the high school, parents, and the students.

Councilmember Von Holtz commented that the lack of a bus turnaround area near Black Hills High School is another issue affecting the extension of bus service. Director Medrud replied that staff has suggested Intercity Transit consider smaller buses in that location; however, the agency is guided by cost issues and staffing. However, there is flexibility in the transit system that could be considered while addressing cost and staffing issues.

Director Medrud reviewed several questions for the Council to consider as part of their review of the element:

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1. Are the proposed goals, policies, and draft implementation actions and the information in Part 1 of the Housing Element presented effectively? What should change to make them more usable?
2. Is the information in Part 2 of the Housing Element presented in an understandable format? What should change to make it clearer?
3. What in the Housing Element would affect you or the things you care about most and what do you expect that affect might be?
4. Are there any unintended consequences or burdens associated with the goals, policies, or draft implementation actions for the Tumwater community?
5. Do any of the goals, policies, or draft implementation actions not address the concerns of the Tumwater community? If so, how could they be amended?
6. Are there any general or specific comments to share about any goals, policies, or draft implementation actions?
7. Are there any changes in the draft implementation action timelines?

Councilmember Cathey requested scheduling an opportunity for the Council to discuss the questions to learn about each member's perspectives and responses to the questions. Councilmember Althausen supported the request and suggested scheduling another work session for the Council to discuss the questions in more detail.

The Council discussed several options for reviewing all the elements and providing important feedback to staff.

Mayor Pro Tem Dahlhoff recommended the Council compile their respective questions and feedback. She recommended scheduling time on a December work session agenda for the Council's review and discussion. She asked staff to include the questions as a separate Word document to enable the Council to answer each question. Director Medrud affirmed the request to update their respective folders and include a document with the questions.

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

City Administrator Parks announced that five of the newly appointed Paramedic Firefighters are nearing completion of graduating from the Fire Academy. Four of the new hires were lateral hires and were not required to attend the academy.

On Saturday, June 14, 2025, Pioneer Park is hosting *Dog Days* between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. and the *Rally in the Valley Volley Ball Tournament* from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

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Juneteenth is scheduled on Thursday, June 19, 2025. City Hall will be closed in observance of the holiday. A proclamation will be issued on June 17, 2025.

The Council recently received an email regarding participation in the July 4<sup>th</sup> Parade. She asked members to review the email and forward any questions to staff and submit their respective entry if they plan to participate in the parade.

The Olympic Air Show is scheduled on Saturday, June 14, 2025 and Sunday, June 15, 2025 at the Olympia Regional Airport.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**With there being no further business, Mayor Pro Tem Dahlhoff adjourned the meeting at 8:11 p.m.**

Prepared by Valerie L. Gow, Recording Secretary/President  
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