

TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
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CONVENE: 5:31 p.m.

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

Staff: City Administrator John Doan.

Others: Meagan Darrow and Tami Lathrop, TOGETHER!

TOGETHER!
RENTAL
ASSISTANCE AND
HOST HOMES
PILOT PROGRAM/
STAY HOME
PROGRAM
PROJECT UPDATE:

City Administrator Doan reported TOGETHER! has partnered with the City to assist young people and families in the community for a number of years. Throughout the pandemic, two programs were offered through TOGETHER! The first was the rental assistance program for families and students through the Tumwater School District by identifying families at risk of losing their homes. The second program is the Host Homes Program. The City provided some start-up funding to reduce the frequency or occurrence of homeless youth. He introduced TOGETHER Executive Director Meagan Darrow.

Ms. Darrow reported TOGETHER, a non-profit organization, has been in existence for 33 years. The Host Homes Program has been in development over the last year and is ready to launch. Additionally, the Tumwater Community Schools Program in partnership with TOGETHER, Tumwater School District, and the City of Tumwater offers rental assistance to families to prevent eviction.

Tami Lathrop, Host Homes Program Director, provided an update on the program. The program provides safe, short-term housing for unaccompanied high school students experiencing housing instability. The program accepts students enrolled in high schools in the Tumwater School District or North Thurston Public Schools. The program matches students with families in Thurston County.

The program vets and trains hosts to provide youth with safe, affirming housing where they are supported. The program supports kinship reconciliation and works with students and their families at the student's discretion. Students are required to participate in their education to complete high school or obtain a GED. Youth case managers provide support to strengthen life skills, budgeting and financial education, job search and resume building, navigating the transit system, conflict resolution, and strengthening their voice and input when planning for their future. The program supports students to help them graduate from the program into independent housing after the student reaches 18 years of age.

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and has completed high school education or obtained a GED.

Funding received from the City afforded the program to leverage additional grants through the state enabling full staffing for the program. Ms. Lathrop reported she joined the program at the end of May as the program director. The program includes a program manager and two case managers. The program has also contracted for services to assist in the preparation of marketing materials, host and staff training, support from a licensed mental health counselor, and training on affirming LGBT+, gender, and racial identity.

The program launched in January 2022 and currently has enrolled two students. Both youths are Tumwater School District students and have been placed in housing. The program is working with a third student who is completing the intake and assessment process. The Community Schools Program has been instrumental in teaming with the program and supporting the goals of the program.

The program is seeking more host families. Currently, the program has one active family providing housing to two Tumwater students. Another family is working through training and documentation and should be in a position to house a student by the end of October. The host family houses a student and provides them with a room and meals. The program supports financial needs of the student, such as extracurricular activities, music lessons, and school dances, etc. The program works with host families to supplement transportation needs of the student and host families can submit bills to help offset some increased costs associated with hosting a student.

Ms. Darrow noted that students participating in the program fall under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Within the state, students living in a host home continue to be eligible for support from the McKinney-Vento services from their home school district, which includes support to and from school for students.

Ms. Lathrop commented on the importance of the Community Schools Program working in support of the Host Homes Program because it is part of the integral success of the program. With support from Community Schools, the program is able to secure referrals through established relationships within the Tumwater School District.

Ms. Lathrop addressed questions from the Council. The program's current budget is able to support 30 host homes within the next 12 months. With full staffing, marketing of the program has been increased to include

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hosting informational sessions. Current host families have volunteered to participate in the training of new host families and provide information on the program.

Ms. Darrow said the funding level for the program this year is approximately \$500,000. A three-year grant was received for the program. The Department of Commence funding was a one-year commitment with options for renewal next year. Because of the focus by the state on youth homelessness, the program is included in the cohort of other similar providers in the state to offer innovative solutions to reduce youth homelessness.

Ms. Darrow responded to questions about the sustainability of the program and how TOGETHER plans to adjust the program or the budget if programs goals are not achieved. Following the establishment of the program, staffing was limited to the director position, which focused on developing the program. The program requires a substantial amount of policy, procedures, and risk management. The program represents the organization's first 24-hour/365-day program requiring additional efforts by the Board and staff of TOGETHER. The pandemic contributed to slowing some progress of the program with some initial host families withdrawing from the program.

Ms. Lathrop added that addressing and abolishing the biases of homeless youth contributes to successfully attracting host homes. Most of the youths have attended the same schools their entire life and want to attend school and have a stable situation so they can succeed and have some sense of permanency. Homeless youths entering the program are often a member of the LGBT+ community, have some gender identity issues that have created family issues, or have the support of a guardian or parent to enroll in the program. Many youths and their parents/guardians enter the program in lieu of participating in the foster care program to avoid losing dependency or parental rights.

Ms. Lathrop shared information on upcoming community outreach events to promote the program and inform the community of its existence.

Suggestions offered by the Council included connecting with active seniors who may be interested in becoming a host family.

Ms. Lathrop explained that youths who are minors must have a guardian or parent's permission to participate in the program. An initial meeting is held with the parent/guardian to discuss the program and its benefits to house their child without losing their parental rights. She has experience

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working within the foster care system and answers questions from parents about the program, which serves as a supplemental resource for stabilizing a youth. Ms. Darrow added that the youths have experienced homelessness and are not from a stable home situation. Both of the youths were living in a shelter situation. Youths participating are not leaving their families for a different option. The program promotes stable housing for youth to help prevent homelessness when they become adults.

Ms. Darrow thanked the Council for the funding commitment to Host Homes to assist in building the program to provide a solution to homeless youth in the community.

Ms. Darrow updated the Council on the Tumwater Community Schools Program through TOGETHER and the home rental assistance program. This year, the program eliminated one staff position because of a smaller contract with the school district. The program is valuable and is viewed as a priority as funding and budgetary changes occur within the school district.

Tumwater Community Schools is an initiative based on the National Community Schools Model. The program places site coordinators or community schools managers in schools to leverage community support. Community school managers identify families who may be experiencing barriers that are impeding a student from participating in school, attending school, or succeeding in school. This year, the program is supported by four staff members comprised of a program director and three community schools managers serving six schools in the Tumwater School District. Schools not directly supported are provided with rental assistance and other district-wide support. This year, the budget totaled \$426,000. Staff members in schools were able to connect with 50 to 60 students or their families to provide rental assistance, snacks, referral to other providers, school supplies, food assistance, and car repair services.

Accomplishments during 2021 and 2022 included:

- Distribution of 137 turkey baskets to all 13 district schools through partnership with 4 the Love Foundation
- Kicks for Kids Program distributed 119 shoes to 9 district schools through partnership with Big 5 Sporting Goods and Thurston County staff
- Served 96 families at Back to Basics Immunization Event in partnership with Thurston County Public Health
- Summer Resource Centers at two schools supported 236 visits for basic needs supplies

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- Fourth annual TOGETHER! Fore Kids Golf Tournament attracted 130 golfers and over 20 sponsors.
- From January through September 2022, the rental assistance program distributed \$34,122 to 25 families with the average payment of \$1,421

Councilmember Dahlhoff asked whether TOGETHER has decided to no longer accept Thurston County funds and how the organization plans to supplement those lost funds. Ms. Darrow explained that Thurston County extended a contract without a competitive process. The organization does not foresee applying to Thurston County for funds despite the county's automatic extension of contracts. The organization will utilize less restrictive funding sources to help fund the organization's foundation and a donor-designated fund, the Swift Fund named after TOGETHER's founder, Earlyse Swift. TOGETHER also receives funds from the Building Changes Foundation to help support the Host Homes Program.

Ms. Darrow thanked the Council and Mayor for the many years of partnership and collaboration. The City of Tumwater has been a key partner in the Community Schools Program and in the development of the Host Homes Program. Host Homes would not be possible without the conversations with the City to vet different options for the program to house unaccompanied youth. Throughout the pandemic, the City of Tumwater was the primary funding source in Tumwater to help families stay housed and address challenges over the course of the pandemic. TOGETHER is seeking continued funding of approximately \$100,000 to help support the Tumwater Community Schools Program. The contract with the school district includes provisions for the school district providing half of the funds with TOGETHER committed to raising the other half. However, this year because of financial difficulties encountered by the Tumwater School District, the contract has been reduced substantially. Additional funds are necessary to fill the gap to retain the existing staffing model through 2022 and 2023. The Host Homes Program is fully funded for the next three years.

Ms. Darrow addressed questions on how TOGETHER has utilized funding from Thurston County in the past. All county funds have been used for direct client services. The request to the City is for funding to maintain staffing levels. All funding for client services is deployed through Community Schools staff. Client services funding for this fiscal year (22-23) include the continued funding from Thurston County and private foundation funding. No new funds have been designated by Tumwater as all 1406 funds have been expended as well as the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds the City received.

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City Administrator Doan advised that the next round of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for the City is not until 2024 (September). The budget includes an annual allocation of \$150,000 for housing and human services programs beyond what is contributed to the county and through small local human services grants.

Councilmember Althausen added that the \$150,000 allocation is the only amount available that the City could tap for any contributions to Regional Housing Council projects.

Mayor Sullivan asked for clarification as to Thurston County funds not allowing for administrative fees as most grants include a percentage for administrative costs to cover staffing requirements. Ms. Darrow replied that TOGETHER receives only \$15,000 from the county and that amount is not sufficient to fund staff costs.

City Administrator Doan said the City has an established long-standing relationship with TOGETHER in supporting Tumwater Community Schools, which was built around a Tumwater philosophy of addressing homelessness as it occurs. The last Community Summit also served as the genesis of Host Homes as an idea for combating youth homelessness.

Mayor Sullivan acknowledged and thanked Ms. Darrow and Ms. Lathrop for attending and presenting the updates.

City Administrator Doan encouraged the Council to provide some preliminary guidance in support of staff exploring funding options and any remaining ARPA funds. A majority of the Council supported pursuing another conversation on the funding request with staff providing additional information on funding sources and availability.

**CAPITOL LAKE –
DESCHUTES
ESTUARY LONG-
TERM
MANAGEMENT
PROJECT UPDATE:**

City Administrator Doan reported the fate and future of Capitol Lake and the Deschutes Estuary has been a long process with the most recent efforts initiated in 2016 with a commitment by the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) and the State Legislature to proceed with identifying a shared governance model. In 2016, the Legislature authorized a budget proviso to fund the planning process. As part of the proviso, the process directed shared participation in future governance and funding for the Capitol Lake system.

The planning process included a series of work groups tasked to complete an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on a set of alternatives with the goal to select the preferred alternative and a model for long-term

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governance and funding.

The Funding and Governance Work Group developed a draft memorandum of understanding between the affected parties of Thurston County, City of Tumwater, City of Olympia, Port of Olympia, Squaxin Island Tribe, local marinas, and the LOTT Clean Water Alliance.

Additionally, the Port of Olympia is working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of Ecology to address contaminated sediments in West Bay. A follow-on action requires dredging of Capitol Lake to remove sediments that have accumulated and are contaminated with toxins and invasive species (New Zealand Mud Snails) complicating the method of sediment disposal. Following completion of the first two processes, the next step is removal of the Fifth Avenue Dam to allow the river to flow unabated into West Bay with sediment depositing into West Bay. Construction of some recreational amenities would follow surrounding the estuary to include boardwalks in the City of Tumwater and City of Olympia, as well as establishment of a maintenance-dredging schedule to dredge West Bay every six years to maintain shipping capabilities. The state has acknowledged that the construction costs associated with the first dredge of the lake, removal of the dam, rebuilding the Fourth Avenue Bridge, and construction of the recreational amenities would be funded by the state of an estimated \$250 million. A formula was developed for the parties to pay a portion of the ongoing maintenance dredging. For the City of Tumwater, that amount in 2022 dollars would be approximately \$2.7 million for a maintenance dredging until 2050.

Staff has explored options for the City to pay its share recognizing that the amount is not due at one time but would entail a payment schedule to pay the \$2.7 million or \$5 million (based on escalation) over a 35-year period. Staff drafted a plan proposing the use of the Stormwater Utility to generate those funds. The proposal includes a 0.5% increase, increasing to 1% in the fourth year followed by a reduction to .5% with the amount alternating between .5% to zero during the timeline to generate sufficient revenue to make payments. City Administrator Doan invited questions on whether the strategy would be effective to fund the amount.

Councilmember Swarthout asked how the costs for the boardwalk would be covered. City Administrator Doan explained that the City would be responsible for the maintenance of the boardwalk. The boardwalk would likely not be constructed until five to ten years. The boardwalk would be included as another facility maintenance obligation by the City. Provisions in the agreement stipulate that the boardwalk design will be approved and accepted by the City.

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Councilmember Schneider asked whether the Olympia Yacht Club and the other parties would be contributing funds. City Administrator Doan said the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is considered a 35% participant (\$10 million) and LOTT and Thurston County would pay \$2.7 million with City of Olympia paying a higher share. The yacht clubs would be responsible for funding based on a different calculation.

Councilmember Schneider commented that over that period the City's stormwater bill would increase 15% not including annual increases in stormwater bills. City Administrator Doan noted that inflation would occur during the same period increasing the stormwater bill even higher. The annual increase attributed to funding maintenance dredging is a cumulative increase.

Councilmember Althausen noted that one entity that does not have a fiscal obligation is the Squaxin Island Tribe. The Funding and Governance Work Group considered the tribe's equity component as the historical stewards of the land.

City Administrator Doan said the next step for the memorandum of understanding will lead to the development of an interlocal agreement between the jurisdictions establishing the amount each jurisdiction will be assessed. Additionally, the proposed Mayor's budget includes the .5% increase in the Stormwater Utility Fund budget.

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

City Administrator Doan reported the Thurston County Commission scheduled an October 18, 2022 public hearing on a proposal to suspend operations of the Hopkins Drainage District. The County Commission is not able to dissolve the district but is allowed to suspend the district indefinitely. Mayor Sullivan testified in support of the scheduling the public hearing, as well as the proposal to suspend the drainage district. The City plans to testify on October 18, 2002 in support of the suspension.

ADJOURNMENT: **With there being no further business, Mayor Sullivan adjourned the meeting at 7:03 p.m.**