



City of La Center

A Community of History and Vision

Newsletter

December 2006

From Mayor James T. Irish

2006 Was a Banner Year for La Center

2006 has been a magical year of accomplishments for the City of La Center – some very visible accomplishments, and others that are not as visible but present tremendous potential for our citizens.

Probably the most dramatic step we took was to resume ownership of the wastewater utility from Clark Public Utilities. By taking over the ownership and daily operation of this facility, La Center is able to repair and upgrade the system, and prepare for major expansion needed to serve our growing community. Planned improvements will reduce the costly infiltration of rain water into the system, increase treatment capacity, and provide a higher quality of water discharged. This utility will prove to be a major asset to the community for many years in the future.

Entertainment in Sternwheeler Park was another visible sign of the vitality of our community. From the Barbershop Quartets

that our citizens enjoyed to the fun of Movie Nights, La Center proved to be a great place to meet as a community. Maintaining and expanding our parks and recreation facilities to meet the needs of a growing City remains a high priority for La Center in 2007 (see article below on the recreational needs assessment).

Less visible to most of our residents but highly significant to our future and economic stability was our ongoing efforts to expand our Urban Growth Boundary and plan for the future growth of the City. For many years, La Center was a quiet little town, off the freeway and out of the mainstream of economic development and growth in the County. La Center has no industry, and very little commercial activity to support city services like police, parks, streets and other amenities.

Today, North Clark County is experiencing significant growth, and La Center will continue to expand regardless of what we

do. But with this growth, we need to “pay the piper,” and work to maintain the high level of City services we all enjoy. Over ten years ago, the City concluded that the only way to create a sustainable economic base for the community was to grow to the I-5 junction. Planning for that growth will allow us to create the types of jobs and tax revenues necessary to maintain and improve city services. For the past two years, we have been working toward this goal.

This year, we completed planning, engineering and environmental studies to support a significant growth in the community. Clark County is currently considering our proposal, and La Center is ready to meet the challenge of responsible growth over the next twenty years.

With the dedicated efforts and leadership of our many citizens, organizations, staff, and consulting team, La Center is truly a “Community of History and Vision.”

More on Page 2:

- Budget Planning
- Did You Know?
- Christmas Festival
- City Hires Planner

Elected Officials

Mayor James T. Irish
 Mayor Pro-Tem
 Linda Tracy
 Councilmember Justin Dale Smith
 Councilmember Bill Birdwell
 Councilmember Troy Van Dinter
 Councilmember Bob Smith

Appointed Officials

Suzanne Levis, Finance Director/City Clerk
 Jeff Sarvis, Director of Public Works
 Tim Hopkin, Chief of Police
 Dale Miller, City Planner

City Hall Offices

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Citizens Speak up on Recreational Needs

Citizens of La Center have provided an overwhelming response in a study of recreational needs. The City has high standards of providing recreational opportunities, and is planning now to meet the needs of a growing population.

Otak, Inc. has been hired to conduct a Recreational Needs Assessment for La Center. Otak

is an architecture firm specializing in transportation, growth management and urban design. They are currently reviewing the many online and written responses to a parks and recreation survey.

As part of the Recreational Needs Assessment, Otak will assess existing park and trail facilities, review population and

demographic characteristics, identify interests of residents and user groups, and review park and trail programs of other cities in the area.

A Public Meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. on December 6 at the Community Center at 1000 E. 4th Street to assure that local concerns and priorities are identified. Contact City Hall for

City to Adopt Budget for 2007

As the year comes to a close, La Center's elected officials, department heads and finance director are busy finalizing the budget for 2007. Whether you enjoy our parks, trails, and recreation facilities, participate in concerts in the park and city festivals, or are planning a new construction project, drive on city streets, or need assistance from the local police department--these are just some of the areas involved in the budget process.

Planning for this budget started in August as the City Council held Strategic Work sessions on Policies and Priorities, and Programs and Projects. Each city department head prepared a detailed estimate of projected revenues and expenditures for the coming year. Mayor Jim Irish worked with Finance Director Suzanne Levis to develop a preliminary budget for review by the City Council and the public. The City Council held two public hearings in November, where they gathered and reviewed comments from local citizens.

This may sound like a lot of paperwork and details for La Center's officials to wade through, but it is an extremely important process. It is through this careful review that the City determines what its

revenues will be and plans how to meet the needs of our citizens. The budget will address ongoing operations of the City, and also reflect the priorities identified in the public process this fall.

La Center will begin the new year with a healthy balance in the Reserve Fund, as well as the operating funds established for specific purposes. The City anticipates that it will collect nearly \$8.3 million in total revenues next year. This figure includes taxes and transfers from federal, state, and county government agencies.

The budget reflects the City's priorities in maintaining public safety, improving and expanding the sewer utility, developing streets and sidewalks in growing areas of the City such as the 4th Street and Highland Avenue realignment, protecting environmental values, assuring responsible growth within the urban growth boundary, and improving parks and recreation facilities.

The City Council is scheduled to approve a final budget on December 13. After that, details of the finalized budget can be found on La Center's website at www.ci.lacenter.wa.us, or copies are available at City Hall.

City Hires Dale Miller as City Planner

There is a new planner in town. Dale Miller came on board as the new City Planner in July. He is responsible for both current and long range planning of the community to ensure and support responsible growth.

Just another boring planner, right?... Wrong! As a transplant from the Midwest, Dale has been a Northwesterner for the last 15 years. He is an accomplished blues guitarist and photographer, loves Mexican food and sushi, and has a wickedly dry sense of humor.

Dale spent 10 years in the US Coast Guard as media liaison and photojournalist. One claim to fame is that he had a photo mural hanging in the Air and Space Museum for several years. He was

called in to help with the Exxon Valdez oil spill, which ran aground the same day his son was born!

No stranger to Clark County, Dale spent 10 years with the County as a transportation planner and land

use planner. He was then the Director of Development & Technology for C-TRAN. There, he dealt with Park & Rides, service planning, and "intelligent" transportation systems.

For the last 1 1/2 years, Dale was a consulting planner with E2 Land Use Planning Services, LLC. He worked on planning issues for several cities throughout Clark County, including La Center.

If you have questions about planning or development requirements, contact Dale at (360) 263-2484, or dmliller@ci.lacenter.wa.us (and bring him a cookie).

Did You Know?

La Center has more law enforcement officers per capita than any other city in Washington!

Annual Christmas Festival in La Center

The annual Christmas Festival is almost here! The festivities begin on December 3 with the Tree Lighting and Fireworks in downtown La Center. Meet Santa at the Tree, and enjoy a free concert featuring the Battle Ground Jazz Ensemble, Aaron Meyer, Bill Lamb and Mark Ensey. All of the fun

starts at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday evening. These Christmas festivities are a long-time favorite in La Center, and are brought to you through the cooperation and support of the City and many local businesses.

Another important part of the Christmas Festival is the annual

Toy Drive. If you wish to donate toys [new toys only please], please drop them at the District 12 Fire Station, either downtown La Center, or 911 N 65th Ave in Ridgefield.

Bring all of the family to enjoy this traditional beginning of the Holiday Season!!!

*Best Wishes for
the Holidays to All
of the Citizens of
La Center.*