




FACTS vs. Disinformation

September 8, 2021




The following information aims to counter the misinformation campaign being promoted by a small group of community members and former employees. The reader will find FACTS as supported by the City's budget, City Council meeting minutes, Planning Commission meeting minutes, and a wide range of public documents located on the City's website. Check out the website: www.ci.lacenter.wa.us.



FACT: For the last decade, the City's primary source of revenue has been the gambling revenue generated by the two (formerly four) card rooms. The card room revenues in 2016 were \$3,136,044 which began to decline in 2017 when the revenues were \$2,374,000. Last year (2020) saw the most significant decrease to \$387,744. Of course, COVID impacted many businesses in the region, and although the card rooms are now open, the rebound is nowhere close to previous years.

Fortunately, in 2019, 2020, and 2021 the revenue losses were lessened by the current housing boom in La Center. It is important to remember that housing and land development fees are not an on-going sustainable source of revenue.



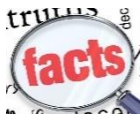
FACT: The City has actively solicited business development since 2017, which was complicated by litigation with the Tribe. Community Development Consultant Jeff Swanson came on board in 2018 and has helped the City carry forward business development at the Junction, which will be realized later this year and early next year. It is important to remember that the cost of labor and materials and the impact of COVID negatively affected construction projects throughout the region.

Jeff successfully secured \$1.5 million in 2019 and \$1.9 million in 2021 from the Washington State Legislature to complete design and engineering work for the East 4th Street/Breeze Creek project, and to renovate the new City Hall and the Community Center buildings. He is currently working with legislators to secure additional state and federal grants for transportation projects around the City and utility projects at the La Center Junction. A developer will soon break ground at the La Center Junction to construct a new hotel, fast food restaurant, convenience store, and other retail spaces.



FACT: The City is responsible for providing public safety to the community and balancing the budget. The City fully budgeted the police department for 2021 at \$1,542,727, which is 37.63%in of the City's General Fund. It is anticipated that 2021 police reform legislation will increase the City's police budget to over \$2 million dollars a year. This nearly \$500,000 increase in the budget represents the need for additional training, record keeping, and possibly body cameras. Implementation of body cameras will have to be negotiated with the police union.

The primary objective of Mayor Thornton and the City Council is to provide professional law enforcement services that are sustainable within the City's budget.



FACT: Mayor Thornton is not getting special consideration by not paying a City sewer bill, as was implied by a former utility clerk. He and his neighbors pay stormwater fees, but each home on the street has a septic tank and thus is not reliant on the City's sewer network.

The City has audited employees' use of the City's computer and internet system several times in the last three years. The results revealed that most employees comply with the City's computer usage policy with only an occasional misstep. However, two egregious violations resulted in the former accountant and the former utility clerk being disciplined, and eventually terminated from the City for violating City policies.