

Questions for February 2021 Coffee with the Mayor

Introduction of Deputy Mayor Tom Ferrell and Interim City Manager Charise Deschenes

Questions from the City:

Covid-19 has had a big impact on the community. How is the City doing in terms of finances? (talking points from Sue Hagner)

Well, the GREAT news is, the City is in fantastic financial condition. All of our operational funds, including the General Fund, Streets, Water and Sewer Funds, ended the year in excellent condition. And this is AFTER the City contributed almost \$1.2 million toward COVID response (like our Small Business Rapid Relief grants and additional human services funding). Not included in these numbers is the fact that the City put first priority on retaining all of our employees and not laying off or furloughing anyone. Despite COVID, we still need to keep a well maintained and beautiful City for all that live and visit here – and a full workforce is critical to meeting this challenging obligation.

In summary - Despite COVID, revenues were strong, expenditures were controlled and ending fund balances or reserves are still very healthy.

It's important to understand that the City's general government services, like public safety and parks, are dependent not upon one but 4 major sources of revenue. These include sales tax, property tax, utility taxes and overhead allocations. This keeps us well insulated against economic downturns or a sudden decline in particular activities. An example of this is that although we saw a significant decline in sales tax related to food service, accommodations and construction (due to COVID), we saw increased activity in our retail sector. The fact that we are the retail center for the Olympic Peninsula is one key to our strength.

That doesn't mean that some streams of revenue did not suffer at the hands of COVID. Hotel/Motel tax was hit pretty hard in 2020, but even these revenues started to rebound toward the end of the year...

In short, we are in great shape heading into 2021. Budgets are tight, however, and we do expect budget amendments later in the year to continue our COVID related responses for the community (like additional human services funding including a rental relief program administered through OLYCAP.)

As I'm sure everyone out there can relate, we look forward to this new year of 2021 (saying goodbye to 2020 and hopefully COVID), and expect to have a promising one.

The community seems to opening up a bit. Do you know what the plan is for local festivals this year?

COVID-19 has made it difficult for event organizers to make plans and it looks like things will still be a bit different this spring and summer to make sure the community and visitors are safe. The Sequim Sunshine Festival is coming up March 5 & 6 and while it is very different from last year's festival, we hope folks will get out and enjoy the revised events. Registration is now open for the Sun Fun Color

Run. That was one of the highlights of last year's event. The run/walk will follow all state and county guidelines. The Chamber of Commerce put together a fun scavenger hunt that encourages friends and family to explore the area. The holiday lights have been revised and enhanced and will go back on the for weekend. And I'm told people should look for signs of kindness throughout town.

The 126th Sequim Irrigation Festival will take place on Saturday, March 8. This festival is put on by community volunteers who have done a great job keeping the festival going through these challenging times. They are still finalizing their plans, and I understand some events will be virtual. But follow their website irrigationfestival.com for the latest news and schedule.

Unfortunately, the Sequim Lavender Festival Street Fair at Carrie Blake Park has been cancelled this year. Event organizers felt like there were too many unknowns. But the good news is that the lavender fields will still bloom this summer and farms will be ready to safely welcome visitors. The farms that are open for the season will be listed on visitsunnysequim.com as we get a little closer to the summer.

I'm waiting for my COVID-19 vaccination. Do you know when the general public will be able to get their shots?

The Sequim area vaccination clinics are being run by the Jamestown Family Health Clinic with support from the City of Sequim, Fire District 3 and the local CERT Teams. They've done an incredible job of getting shots in arms. They are following the tiers of who gets the shots that have been given by the state. I have not heard of a timeline for the general public, but as a region and county we are leading the state in the percentage of people vaccinated, so everyone is doing a great job. The best thing to do is go directly to the clinic's website jamestownhealth.org for the latest information on clinic dates, how to sign up for registration, and who is eligible.

I have recently been hearing about the Sequim UnderStory. What's that all about? (providing background from Arts Coordinator Aurora Lagattuta)

What is Sequim Understory Creative Placemaking Initiative?

This initiative teams up with the City's Head of Parks, Arts, Public Works and its Art Commission to engage the Sequim community in a 2-year process that will redesign and beautify Centennial Place so that it can better serve both its existing and its new community programs, needs and desires.

Why Centennial Place?

Centennial Place is the name for the cement lot at the corner of Sequim and Washington. This land was purchased in 2013 the year of the city's centennial and hence was named Centennial Place. In 2018, city council asked that something might be done here to help beautify the location.

Due to the high visibility of this corner at center of Sequim's Downtown, we feel at the City the need to include our local citizens in its planning process. That is how the Sequim Understory Creative Placemaking Initiative came to be.

About Call for Artists:

The City Arts Advisory Commission (CAAC) is seeking proposals from artists that engage with the community as part of the *Sequim Understory*, a Creative Placemaking Initiative that re-envision Sequim City planning. Practicing artists of any medium on the Olympic Peninsula, who have a background or a keen interest in community engagement, are encouraged to apply.

The CAAC is looking for strong proposals that will engage with our community, illustrate, and answer the question: Who is Sequim to you?

Artists are asked to create a community engagement plan that creatively addresses this inquiry and creates a final artwork in response. The artwork can be of any form, including without limitation a painting, song, poem, story, or sculpture, or a performance of theater or dance. The two selected artists will each receive a \$1,000.00 stipend for art expenses.

To apply, please visit: <https://www.sequimcityarts.com/call-for-artists> Deadline for submissions is Monday, March 15, 2021 at 8:00 p.m.

What is Creative Placemaking

Creative Placemaking is a method of community collaboration with place. The National Endowment for the Arts defines creative placemaking as, “the use of creative strategies for equitable community planning and development.”

How does adding an artist help plan a city park?

What the past decade of Creative Placemaking projects in both small and large cities demonstrates is that artistic tactics expand the conversations about place beyond data and desired objects into a conversation that includes:

What do people want to do in this place?

How do people desire to feel in this place?

What are the stories that this place should tell?

These are questions artists are skilled at asking and answering.

Common Questions:

What is the outcome?

Local citizens will select the design components that are placed at this corner. They will also influence the overall tone and story of the design.

Are artists designing Centennial Place?

No. Artists are helping us to better understand the story, desires, and feelings within the community. They are helping us connect the dots between the community's stories and the data.

What is the basic timeline?

The first round of surveys will be released from April to September 2021. Artists will engage with community from April - October 2021. In the fall, a team of city staff will review surveys and select 5-10 achievable design options. The committee will look at citizens' common desires, and achievable choices within the project's budget. Their selections will be sent to council for approval and then the public will vote again on their top design choices in 2022. It is a very similar process to the People's Project.

Website Links: (sent already to KSQM)

Sequimcityarts.com

Call for Artists can be found: <https://www.sequimwa.gov/694/Call-for-Artists-City-Arts-Advisory-Comm> and <https://www.sequimcityarts.com/call-for-artists>

About Sequim Understory: <https://www.sequimcityarts.com/understory>

The City is starting a Parks Master Plan? What's involved in that?

The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space plan with the impact fee update is kicking off on February 24, 2021, virtually with the firm Conservation Technix. Through that meeting we will begin to lay the foundations on current challenges and the project overview. We will begin discussing public involvement and the timings of public outreach with survey designs and stakeholder identification.

This is a really exciting time for the City because we're having a professional service provider work with staff and the community to get the public's perspective help develop a plan that is both financially realistic and fits the needs of the community.

This project is expected to last through the year and our target is to be completed by end of October or November. Our challenges include COVID and the ability to reach out and get a full representation of the community and stakeholders, with Conservation Technix's expertise and experience we anticipate this to be a fruitful and engaging experience for everyone. This project will tie in with the comprehensive plan, the CIP, council goals and strategic plans laying the foundation for the future of parks and recreation. Conservation Technix will also be using strategies design to fulfill RCO requirements that will enable the City to apply for additional grant funding for our projects designated by the people of Sequim.

I saw the new Be Kind banners around town. What else is the City doing to promote kindness?

As you all know, that last couple of years have been pretty rough for our community. The City will be sending out messages of kindness and ideas for kindness through our social media pages, newsletters, and website. As mentioned, the Sunshine Festival will be incorporating some kindness elements into their event as well. We are really hoping that this is a message that the community will get behind and support. It's time for our community to heal and move forward.