

SAMMAMISH

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CITY NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2009

City competes for state grant

\$1 MILLION AWARDED FOR S.E. 20TH PROJECT

Thanks to some quick work by the city's engineering staff, a brand-new "urban vitality" grant program run by the state's Public Works Board has just sent \$1 million Sammamish's way.

The state grant, which was approved on Oct. 6, will complete the funding for a sidewalk and bike lane project along Southeast 20th Street that carries a total price tag of \$3.4 million.

"Our city engineer, Laura Philpot, did a great job of researching the grant criteria and crafting an excellent application on short notice," City Manager Ben Yazici said. "We were competing against 60 other agencies for a portion of \$9.5 million in grant money so we feel very fortunate."

The project, slated to start construction next spring, will build a sidewalk on the north side of S.E. 20th Street and bike lanes on both sides of the road from 228th Avenue to 212th Avenue.



Polishing up a city firetruck at Sammamish Fire Station #82 along 228th Ave. N.E.

City happy with firefighters; concerned about rising costs

The firefighting and emergency services supplied by Eastside Fire and Rescue (EF&R) represent the city's biggest annual operating expense. In 2009, the EF&R contract cost \$5,556,424, or 26 percent of the annual operating budget.

It's also the fastest growing major expense, with contract costs leaping

an average of seven percent annually between 2002 and 2009.

"The rapid rise of EF&R costs is a big concern," City Manager Ben Yazici said. "Especially since it's been happening as the economy and our revenues have been trending downward. We

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Cultural diversity in Sammamish

THE MAYOR OFFERS HIS THOUGHTS ON MULTICULTURALISM AND SPINACH

Every ten years the United States goes through an introspective process called the US Census. The time is coming once again and it will be interesting to see what the census has



*Don Gerend
Mayor*

to say about Sammamish.

The 2000 census, taken just after the city of Sammamish incorporated, classified our population as 88% White, 1% Black, and 8% Asian (which includes Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Filipino and Vietnamese in decreasing order of population). The census also showed about 2.5% Hispanic.

I suspect that the racial and cultural diversity in Sammamish as revealed by the 2010 census will show quite a different story. Microsoft and other high tech firms on the eastside have brought a wave of new immigrants to this wonderful place to live.

Last month I was invited to participate in Diwali, the Indian Festival of Lights, at the Pacific Cascade Freshman Campus. This was my first immersion into this wonderful Hindu tradition and I was truly impressed.

Some 500 guests, including many delightful children, attended and participated in this event. A most colorful and engaging play was put on, telling the story of Rama, his 14-year exile, and his return guid-

ed by the lights of the citizens. At least that was the story as perceived through the eyes of this son of a European immigrant raised in upstate Wisconsin.

The dress with all the wonderful colors, the traditions, even the food, contrast very sharply with the European cultures that were mixed together in the Midwest town of my upbringing.

Fifty years ago the sociological

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**Don Gerend
Mayor**

story of America and its growth through the waves of immigration, as taught to school children, centered around the melting pot theme.

We were told how immigrants assimilated, blended into a relatively homogeneous society, and resurfaced with a strong sense of American identity.

With that melting pot concept,

immigrants lost their original cultural identity and so did their children. My Mother strongly resisted that assimilation, and growing up we children were taught many of the customs of her homeland.

This is what I experienced last month at Diwali, and it was wonderful. I firmly believe that Sammamish is much richer for its increasing multiculturalism, where immigrants retain and pass on many of their cultural traditions while participating in the new traditions of this youngest city in western Washington.

Rather than the old melting pot stripping the immigrants of their culture, I believe a more enlightened approach is to encourage immigrants to continue practicing and propagating their cultures from one generation to the next, while at the same time encouraging engagement in the main stream of their new city and country.

I look forward to many more multicultural experiences in Sammamish and elsewhere, especially those that allow me to broaden my dining experience. The food at Diwali was delicious!

One caveat, though: Diwali taught me that multiculturalism does have its limits. To my Wisconsin palate, spinach is still spinach, no matter who serves it up!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Don Gerend". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Summer parkway project finishes up as a bargain

LOW BIDS, IMPACT FEES AND FEDERAL FUNDS REDUCE CITY EXPENDITURES

The new intersection at the bottom of Inglewood Hill Road and the road improvements that extend north along the East Lake Sammamish Parkway for about four-tenths of a mile were supposed to cost about \$8.2 million – according to engineers’ estimates of the construction cost.

But the winning bid came in \$2.1 million below that estimate. And once developer impact fees and a federal grant are taken into account, Public Works Director John Cunningham says the city’s “out-of-pocket” construction costs will come in at roughly \$3.2 million.

“Congressman Dave Reichert obtained a federal grant of \$742,500 for the project, so that really helped,” Cunningham said. “And then, over time, developer impact fees will offset about another \$2.2 million.

“Considering how much this project will help traffic flow, reduce accidents, and diminish environmental impact, the real bottom line price tag of \$3.2 million would have to be considered a bargain, I think.”

The new intersection allows drivers coming down Inglewood Hill Road to head north on the parkway without having to make a right turn. And southbound drivers on the parkway will no longer have to make a left turn to head up Inglewood Hill Road.

“This new configuration should eliminate a lot of acci-



Looking south, cars leave the parkway and head up Inglewood Hill Road. A slip lane on the right allows traffic to continue south on the parkway without having to go through the main intersection.



Looking north along the parkway, the new bikelanes, median strip, and turning lane are visible. In the background, a car makes a left turn onto a side road from the new turning lane. A sidewalk has also been added on east side of the parkway.

dents,” Cunningham said. “That left turn up the hill against oncoming traffic used to produce a big percentage of our collisions inside the city.”

The parkway improvements north of the intersection include a median strip-center turn lane, bike lanes, storm water facilities, and a sidewalk on the east side of the roadway.

“The center turn lane will really help residents safely enter and exit the steep, little driveways along this section of the parkway,” Cunningham said. “And the new turn lane means they won’t be holding up traffic as they wait for an opening to get off the parkway.”

With Phase 1A complete, the city will now turn its attention to Phase 1B, which is scheduled to begin construction next spring. Phase 1B will widen and make seismic improvements to an existing bridge along the parkway and extend the road improvements north along the parkway to Northeast 26th Street. The \$2.7 million construction cost of Phase 1B will be covered entirely by federal stimulus money. No additional improvement phases have been funded by the City Council.

For more information on the East Lake Sammamish Parkway project, go to the city website at www.ci.sammamish.wa.us/ELSP.aspx or contact Project Manager Jeff Brauns (jbrauns@ci.sammamish.wa.us, 425-295-0561).

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need to do a lot of work on this with EF&R over the coming weeks.”

To that end, the City Council has invited EF&R’s administrative staff leadership to a study session at City Hall on Nov. 16. Arrangements are also being made for a meeting of all EF&R partners early next year.

The seven percent annual cost increases for 2002-2009 far exceeded the three percent average rate of inflation for that same period. The seven percent figure is also far above the one percent annual increase in property tax revenue cities are allowed to take in, per state law.

EF&R is a consortium that serves Sammamish, Issaquah, North Bend, Fire District 10 and Fire District 38. It’s governed by an eight-member regional board. Two Sammamish City Council members are on that board. Sammamish joined EF&R in January 2000, one year after EF&R first formed.

“We are very happy with the service provided by firefighters who work in our Sammamish fire stations,” Yazici said. “Our concerns are focused on the business relationship we have with EF&R’s administrative headquarters in Issaquah.

“I hope these upcoming meetings will help us all find clarity, and a path to better cost control.”

Although he’s hopeful that solutions can be found, Yazici says it’s a good business practice to look at other options.

“To their credit, the City Council unanimously asked me to take that common sense step,” Yazici said. “A consultant is doing the analysis for us now.”

Those options could include contracting with a different agency – a nearby city, for example – or having Sammamish establish its own fire department.

One concern much on the city’s

mind is EF&R’s apparent interest in adding more participants to the consortium and expanding the organization into a Regional Fire Authority (RFA). The city’s analysis indicates that if Sammamish was folded into an RFA it would raise city costs even more, but provide no improvement in service to Sammamish taxpayers.

“Our community is writing bigger checks every year as it is,” Yazici said. “So we’re naturally very concerned about the RFA idea. That’s one of many things we

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**Ben Yazici
Sammamish City Manager**

need to discuss in the weeks ahead.”

The city’s partnership with EF&R runs through 2014, but Yazici thinks it’s possible the city could negotiate an earlier exit if that’s the direction the City Council decides to go.

“It wouldn’t be easy. Fire service partnerships are pretty complicated, and we would want to minimize the impact on the other partners, but we may be forced to take on that challenge if we can’t get costs under control.”

Although the city partners with EF&R for fire and emergency services, Sammamish owns the fire stations and the equipment positioned inside the city. If the city started its own organization, much of the infrastructure and equipment would already be in place.

The same would be true if the city contracted with a nearby city, or some

other agency, to supply firefighters and administrative staff.

“If people have been following this, they know some tension has developed between EF&R and the city,” Yazici said. “Unfortunately, we’ve had a difficult time coordinating the financial data we get from EF&R with the 2- to 6-year time horizon we try to use in our financial planning and analysis.”

In these difficult economic times, Yazici thinks all parties need to be open to adjustments. The city has been trying to hold down costs in many areas – capital projects have been pushed out to later years, city staff vacancies have been left unfilled, and staff salaries have even been reduced.

“I was very proud of our whole staff when they agreed to take a small pay reduction to match the drop in the cost of living,” Yazici said. “That’s not something you see everyday.

“I hope we can work things out with EF&R because their services are excellent. But at the same time our primary responsibility is to the taxpayers of Sammamish.

“We need to find a way to maintain the excellent level of service we have now, but protect ourselves from the sticker shock we’re experiencing on an annual basis.”

City’s 2009 Fire and Emergency Service Costs:

**Partner contribution to EF&R:
\$5,217,895**

**Equipment replacement:
\$298,265**

**Facilities maintenance:
\$40,264**

**Total EF&R costs to city:
\$5,556,424**

City receives “budget presentation” award

Just as it did two years ago, and two years before that, the city has received the “Distinguished Budget Presentation Award” from the nation’s Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA).

To win the GFOA award, a budget must excel as:

- a policy document
- a financial plan
- an operations guide
- a communications device

This latest award, presented at the Oct. 20 City Council meeting, was for the city’s 2009/2010 biennial budget.

“It’s a credit to our finance department that we’ve consistently earned this award,” said City Manager Ben Yazici. “I know it gives our residents a lot of confidence when we do a good job of tracking and accounting for their tax dollars.”



Mike Bailey (center), a member of the Government Finance Officers Association Executive Board, stands with city Finance Director Lyman Howard (left) and Deputy Finance Director Aaron Antin after delivering the “Distinguished Budget Presentation Award” to the city of Sammamish at the Oct. 20 City Council meeting.

Library system approves sale of building to the city

The King County Library System Board of Trustees has approved the sale of the Sammamish Library building to the city.

The sale price: \$3.4 million. The city’s goal: To partner with the Boys and Girls Club and turn the old library into a recreation center for all age groups.

The library building, located at the intersection of 228th Avenue and Inglewood Hill Road, will pass into city hands after the new library opens next to City Hall early next year.

“The plan is for the Boys and Girls Club to add a gymnasium to the building, make other improvements, and then staff the building,” City Manager Ben Yazici said. “Middle and high school kids would be the focus during

non-school hours, but there would be plenty of time for seniors and pre-schoolers when school is in session.”

Along with sports, fitness, cultural arts, music and other programs, the new facility may also have a computer lab and a recording studio. The city plans to ask residents what other features they would like to see at the rec center.

Jessi Richardsion, the city’s parks and rec director, thinks the new building could be ready for some initial use as early as next September.

“We may try a ‘soft launch’ around that time to get the ball rolling,” Richardsion said. “But it will probably be 2011 before the new improvements are done and we’re operating at full capacity.”



An artist’s rendering of the new recreation center. A new gymnasium (far left) will be added to the old library building.

Plateau Notes:

Sammi Award nominations open

If you know a community-spirited person who goes that extra mile, inspires his fellow residents, and deserves recognition, the SAMMI Awards organization is now accepting nominations.

For more information on the nomination process, go to www.sammiawards.org or nominations@sammiawards.org.

You should also mark March 13 on your calendar. That's when the SAMMI Awards will be handed out at Mary Queen of Peace Church.

Hardware: A love story

The Sammamish Arts Commission will stage a new art display in City Hall next month. The display will feature the work of local artists Larry Calkins and Carla Dimitriou, both of whom will use materials available at hardware stores to create their art.

The opening reception for the new display will be on Thursday, Dec. 10, 6-8 p.m., at City Hall. The work of Calkins and Dimitriou will remain on view until mid-March.

Evans Creek Preserve Master Plan adopted

The future of Evans Creek Preserve, a 179-acre plot of land just north of the city limits, was set in motion last month when the City Council adopted a Master Plan for the undeveloped open space.

Halloween spirit invades City Hall



This was the scene at City Hall on Friday, Oct. 30, as city employees waited for the rush of trick-or-treaters who came one day early to collect their well-deserved treats.

The 20-year plan calls for picnic shelters, restroom facilities, parking lots, trails, boardwalks, viewing platforms, natural areas and a play area, among other things.

The majority of the land – 174 acres – was purchased by the city in 2000 for \$1.5 million. For more information on the preserve, go to the city website at www.ci.sammamish.wa.us/projects/EvansCreek.aspx.

Volunteers needed for Medical Reserve Corps

Under the auspices of the Citizen Corps, a non-profit organization formed after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, volunteers are being sought for a local Medical Reserve Corps, a community group that would help out dur-

ing health care emergencies.

Medical and non-medical volunteers needed include: lab technicians, pharmacists, physicians, nurses, call center operators, interpreters and logistics workers. To learn about the full list of volunteer opportunities, contact program coordinator Nick Larson (425-221-4029, SammamishMRC@gmail.com).

City AM radio on air

There's a hot new radio station in town that's going to come in very handy any time there's an emergency, a traffic problem, or any other situation that demands the rapid dispersal of information. Please tune in to 540 on your AM dial to hear the latest from the city of Sammamish.

CITY OF SAMMAMISH

Skyline's annual homecoming parade marches on

HIGH SCHOOL TRADITION NOW IN ITS SEVENTH YEAR

It takes some rerouting of evening traffic, but it's become an autumn tradition in Sammamish – the Skyline High School homecoming parade on 228th Avenue.

This year's parade – the seventh annual edition – traveled the usual route from Discovery Elementary to Skyline High on Friday, Oct. 2. The inaugural parade took place on Oct. 24, 2003.

Other than a slightly late start, this year's parade went off without a hitch. So did the homecoming football game: The Spartans beat Garfield High School 55-0.



The Skyline High School marching band heads north on 228th Avenue on Oct. 2.

CITY CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

Tuesday, Nov. 3

City Council Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 5

Planning Commission Mtg, 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Nov. 10

City Council Study Session, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 11

Veterans Day, city offices closed

Monday, Nov. 16

Arts Commission Mtg, 6:30 p.m.

City Council Study Session, 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Nov. 17

City Council Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 18

Sammamish Youth Board, 6 p.m.

Parks and Rec Comm. Mtg, 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 19

Planning Commission Mtg, 6 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 21

Fall Planting Event, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Lower Sammamish Commons Native Plant Garden

Thursday, Nov. 26 - Friday, Nov. 27

Thanksgiving Day, city offices closed

DECEMBER

Tuesday, Dec. 1

City Council Meeting, 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 3

Planning Commission Mtg, 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Dec. 8

City Council Special Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 9

Parks and Rec Comm. Mtg, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 16

Sammamish Youth Board, 6-7 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 17

Planning Commission Mtg, 6 p.m.

Monday, Dec. 21

Arts Commission Mtg, 6:30 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 25

Christmas Day, city offices closed

PLEASE NOTE:

All meetings and events at City Hall, unless otherwise noted. Times, dates and locations are subject to change. Please consult the city website for the most current information.



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Councilmember



Kathleen Huckabay
Councilmember



Michele Petitti
Councilmember



Nancy Whitten
Councilmember

The City of Sammamish and the
Sammamish Youth Board invite you to a

HOLIDAY LIGHTING CEREMONY

Wednesday, December 2
5:30 to 6:30
Sammamish City Hall

Local Choral Group Performances
Sammamish Youth Board Giving Tree
Refreshments and Hot Beverages
Other Activities for Kids

CITY OF SAMMAMISH OFFICES

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Pete Butkus	Deputy City Manager
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Lyman Howard	FinanceDir/AsstCityMgr
John Cunningham	Public Works Director
Jessi Richardson	Parks & Rec Director
Mike Sauerwein	AdminServices Director
Melonie Anderson	City Clerk
Nathan Elledge	Police Chief
Lee Soptich	Fire Chief
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