

# SAMMAMISH

ISSUE 140

CITY NEWSLETTER

FEB. 2014

## NE Water District creates a big stir

DISTRICT NEWSLETTER GIVES RESIDENTS THE WRONG IMPRESSION ABOUT A POTENTIAL MERGER WITH CITY

Although their concerns appeared to soften when they received accurate information from the city, dozens and dozens of residents sent alarmed emails to City Hall after receiving a special newsletter from the Northeast Sammamish Sewer and Water District (NESSWD).

The district, which provides water to about 3,250 customer accounts in north Sammamish, gave residents the impression that a merger with the city would result in higher rates, the addition of chlorine to the water supply, and a chemically induced loss of “taste” quality.

City Manager Ben Yazici says the district newsletter went out after the city proposed a joint feasibility study that would have analyzed the pluses and minuses of a merger.

Such mergers, or assumptions, are encouraged by the state’s Growth Management Act so that cities can consolidate urban services, eliminate

*See WATER, pg. 3*



## Forging ahead with EF&R

CITY, PARTNERS SIGN OFF ON NEW AGREEMENT

Following long and sometimes frustrating negotiations, all of the Eastside Fire and Rescue (EF&R) partners, including Sammamish, have signed on to a new 7-year agreement.

The pact, which begins at the end of this year, will reduce Sammamish’s costs by about \$2.8 million over the seven years of the agreement.

“We needed to reduce our share

of the cost,” City Manager Ben Yazici said. “Under the old agreement, it became clear to us that Sammamish was subsidizing the other partners. I’m very happy that we got things worked out.”

EF&R is made up of Sammamish, Issaquah, North Bend, District 10 and District 38. When Sammamish first began calling for changes to the agree-

*See FIRE, pg. 4*

**MAYOR’S MESSAGE**  
*Page 2*

**NEW MAYOR**  
*Story on page 5*

**DAPHNE ROBINSON**  
*Story on page 6*

## Tent city leaves, but homeless challenge remains

FORTUNATELY, THERE ARE MANY WAYS FOR GENEROUS RESIDENTS TO HELP

Just a few days before writing this message, at a Sammamish Kiwanis breakfast, I heard a brief report from Dawn Sanders, our city's Volunteer Coordinator, concerning the plight of homeless families in King County.

I wanted to know more and turned to C.J. Kahler, Community Service Chair for the Rotary of Sammamish. The statistics are dismaying. Family Housing Connection, the entry agency for homeless families through the 2-1-1 system, recently pared down their waiting list from more than 400 families, with the most critical need, to 250 families, because there was so little chance that so many families could ever be helped. Many of these families are living in cars, outside in tents, or in places not meant for human habitation.



*Tom Vance  
Mayor*

Here is the demographic for all the homeless families counted this past De-

ember 23:

- 33% are young parents, between the ages of 18 and 25
- 50% of the children are under age 6
- 70% of the parents are not currently employed
- 69% are homeless for the first time
- 57% are doubled-up (staying with a friend or family member)
- 85% want employment
- Most of these families have a low housing barrier: they simply can't afford housing in King County.

Over the past three months that the homeless encampment for adults, Tent City 4, has been located in Sammamish,

I have been impressed with the passion and dedication with which our citizens have been willing to help the residents with food, transportation and many other services they required. Local churches, service groups and Sammamish families and individuals contributed to the effort.

That should not be a surprise. Many of our Sammamish citizens are involved with local and regional groups working on homelessness, hunger, and the wellbeing of adults, teens, and families who are at risk. In a city that prides itself as being "kid-safe and family-friendly," many of our citizens have looked beyond their neighborhoods to help those in need.

If you would like to keep up the spirit of the past three months and join many of your neighbors in the effort to end homelessness, there are many local and regional non-profit organizations that could use your time, energy and money. You can find a way to help through your church, workplace, local service organizations, or independently.

Here is a list of some – but not all – of the local and regional agencies focusing on homelessness. You can "bing" them to find out more about them: The ARAS Foundation, Friends of Youth, Together Center, Committee to End Homelessness, Hopelink, the YMCA, Catholic Community Services, and Lifewire.

As this is my first "mayor's message" I want to say it is an honor to serve as your Mayor. The next two years will be as filled with challenging issues as the last two. I am looking forward to all of it.

## New tent city code needs your input

Following Tent City 4's recent stay at Mary Queen of Peace Church, the Planning Commission is gearing up to develop city code that will more specifically address the permitting of homeless encampments. To that end, the city will research the experience of peer cities and gather stakeholder input.

Throughout this code development process, the city welcomes your input. In addition to expressing your thoughts at public meetings, please send your comments and inquiries to [HEC@sammamish.us](mailto:HEC@sammamish.us). Your comments will be included as part of the public record and be available for review by both the Planning Commission and City Council.



*Tent City 4 in Sammamish.*

*WATER, cont. from pg. 1*

managerial redundancies, and increase efficiency.

Although NESSWD declined the city's offer of a joint study, Yazici says all discussions were cordial and professional. That's one of the reasons, as he notes in the Q & A that follows, that the tone of the district's newsletter took him by surprise.

**Q:** Tell us about the city's discussions with the water district.

**A:** We initiated the talks last year and I thought they went very well. In the end, the district declined our offer of a joint feasibility study, but it was all very pleasant and professional. They know that cities are encouraged by state law to assume water districts, so I don't imagine our proposal was a surprise to them.

**Q:** When alarmed emails started coming into City Hall, what did you do?

**A:** Well, I took a look at the special newsletter they sent out and immediately recognized what the problem was. I mean, if I had received that newsletter, I would have marched down to City Hall and lodged a protest myself.

**Q:** Why? What was so wrong with the newsletter?

**A:** It gave NESSWD customers the erroneous impression that we were going to impose a tax on water, raise rates and blend their supply with chlorinated water from other systems. A lot of the emails we got also accused us of trying to enlarge our empire, grow government and and capture a revenue "spigot."

**Q:** Let's take those bit by bit. Would an assumption by the city grow government?

**A:** The state law's intent is to shrink government through consolidation. The idea is to share equipment, share

staff resources, and eliminate redundancy.

**Q:** What about the revenue "spigot" concern.

**A:** The only additional source of revenue would be through the imposition of a utility tax. But we've never had a utility tax in Sammamish and there are no plans to add one. Our residents seem to like the fact that they have a small city government. We don't need a utility tax.

**Q:** Tell us about chlorine?

**A:** The NESSWD system doesn't have chlorine, and unless there's an unforeseen circumstance, there would be no reason to add chlorine. I think part



*Ben Yazici  
City Manager*

of the problem is the word "merge." Some people think it means were going to merge and blend all the water in the city. Not so. NESSWD is a distinct system with its own wells and would remain that way. A merger with the city would not increase the chances that chlorine would find its way into the NESSWD system.

**Q:** What about rate increases?

**A:** At NESSWD, there are probably two main reasons rates could move. One is operating expenses. If the cost of

energy went up, for example, they could raise rates. And, two, they might have to raise rates to repair and replace worn out infrastructure. In the second case, the money could be used for immediate expenses, or to fund a capital reserve fund that would pay for those improvements over time. The reserve fund is really important. If that reserve isn't built over time through small, incremental deposits, customers could see a big jump in their rates when "repair and replace" time comes around.

**Q:** What's the financial situation at NESSWD, and what's the state of their infrastructure?

**A:** That's one of the things we wanted to understand better as part of the proposed feasibility study. We'd like to know how old their infrastructure is, what their plans for replacement are, what condition their capital reserve fund is in, and so forth. Not just because we're curious, but because it's part of our fiduciary responsibility as a city to make sure basic public services are properly funded and sustainable.

**Q:** Are rate increases as likely under NESSWD management as they would be under city management?

**A:** I think so. Assuming both entities have an equal interest in maintaining a solid system, the chances of a rate increase are about the same. Rates will depend mostly on the age of the system and how pro-active NESSWD has been in maintaining its infrastructure.

**Q:** So what's going to happen now?

**A:** There is no great urgency associated with this matter. The Growth Management Act encourages mergers like this, but they don't put a deadline on it. In the absence of a joint feasibility study, we'll just find other ways to gather information and follow the spirit of the law.

## Community & Aquatic Center open house on Feb. 10 PUBLIC WELCOME TO REVIEW DEVELOPMENT PLANS, PROGRAM OPTIONS

As part of the permit review process for the new Community and Aquatic Center, the city will hold an open house on Monday, Feb. 10, 5:30-7 p.m., at City Hall. All residents and stakeholders are welcome to attend, ask questions and provide comments.

Among other things, attendees will be able to review the current development plans and dig into the details a bit. City staff will be available to answer specific questions about the facility itself, the regulations that apply to its development, and the programming options being considered.



*Artist's rendering of new facility, as viewed from City Hall Plaza.*

In this case, the city has a dual role. It is both the applicant (Parks & Rec Department) and the permitting agency that reviews the application. The city's project manager in charge of the review is Senior Planner Evan Maxim ([emaxim@sammamish.us](mailto:emaxim@sammamish.us)).

The Community and Aquatic Center, to be located on 9 acres of city-owned land just west of City Hall and the library, will provide 68,000 square feet of space on two levels. Among its amenities: two swimming pools, gym and fitness space, locker rooms, weights and cardio, a child watch area and 300 parking spaces.

### *FIRE, cont. from pg. 1*

ment, there was little support from the other partners. But once it appeared Sammamish was on the verge of starting its own fire department and leaving EF&R, negotiations became more productive.

"We really did our due diligence," Yazici said. "We examined the alternatives and hired FCS Group to determine if it would be feasible to start our own department."

The answer, according to the consultant, was yes. Sammamish already owned the three fire stations inside the city, and all the associated trucks and equipment, so the city wouldn't have been starting from scratch.

"Starting our own fire department was an attractive option," Yazici said, "because it would have given us more control. But it also would have meant more administrative work. So, in the end, the City Council voted to extend the partnership under new terms."

During negotiations, the city pointed out that it was paying for 28 percent of EF&R's costs, but receiving only 19 percent of the calls for service. That was the product of a funding model that based each partner's share of the cost solely on its assessed valuation. Sammamish asked that calls for service be part of the funding model equa-

tion, as well.

"Our Councilmembers, along with city staff, put a lot of time into this effort," Yazici said. "I'm very happy that their efforts, and the efforts of our EF&R partners, paid off with a new, 7-year agreement."

Paying for fire services is the largest item in the city's operating budget every year. In 2013, it cost \$6 million.



*Firefighters at Sammamish Station #81*

## Council selects Tom Vance for 2-year term as mayor THE ONE-YEAR DEPUTY MAYOR POSITION GOES TO KATHY HUCKABAY

On Jan. 7, during their first meeting of 2014, the City Council selected a new mayor and deputy mayor.

Tom Vance, a councilmember since 2011, received the nod as mayor. Kathy Huckabay, a member of the original 1999 Council who took a 4-year break before being re-elected in November, was chosen as deputy mayor.

In Sammamish, the mayor serves a two-year term, the deputy mayor a one-year term. Vance takes the place of the outgoing mayor, Tom Odell, and Huckabay the place of the outgoing deputy mayor, Ramiro Valderrama. Odell and Valderrama remain on the Council.



*Tom Vance  
Mayor*



*Kathy Huckabay  
Deputy Mayor*

## An updated city vision statement is in the works! CITY COUNCIL, PLANNING COMMISSION WILL WORK ON IT AT FEB. 11 MEETING

As part of the comp plan rewrite process currently underway, the city must try to identify a community vision, a consensus view of what Sammamish is now and what it should be in the future. It's not an easy task.

Nevertheless, city staffers and a consultant team have been reaching out to residents as vigorously as possible, gathering perspectives and inviting all comers to contribute their thoughts.

To review the public input, two joint meetings of the City Council and Planning Commission were scheduled. The first was on Feb. 4. The next is scheduled for Feb. 11 at 6:30 p.m.

The current vision statement (see box) dates back to the incorporation era. Periodically updating

the vision statement has very real consequences, City Manager Ben Yazici says.

"The vision helps us create goals, which in turn help us create appropriate policies," Yazici said. "The vision is the broad idea that gives us a good sense of direction as a city."

In addition to attending the joint meeting of the City

Council and Planning Commission meeting on Feb. 11, residents are encouraged to go to the city website ([www.sammamish.us](http://www.sammamish.us)), click on the "Sammamish Comprehensive Plan 2035" tab, and answer questions about their vision for Sammamish. Residents may also share their perspective by emailing their comments to [sammamish2035@sammamish.us](mailto:sammamish2035@sammamish.us).

### **What do you think our current Vision for Sammamish?**

*The vision of Sammamish is a community of families.  
A blend of small-town atmosphere with a  
suburban character, the City also enjoys a unique  
core of urban lifestyles and conveniences.  
It is characterized by quality neighborhoods, vibrant natural  
features, and outstanding recreational opportunities.  
A variety of community gathering places provide numerous  
civic, cultural, and educational opportunities.  
Residents are actively involved in the decisions that shape  
the community and ensure a special sense of place.*

*From a comprehensive plan outreach poster.*

## The city would like to turn you into a Trail Steward!

### WASHINGTON TRAILS ASSOCIATION WILL TRAIN VOLUNTEERS AT EVANS CREEK PRESERVE

If you like working outdoors and have always wanted to make a contribution to your community, 2014 just might be the year to get started. The city, in collaboration with the Washington Trails Association, is hoping to train a handful of willing residents and turn them into full-fledged, volunteer Trail Stewards in the months ahead.

“Our goal is to recruit people who would enjoy leading work parties,” Dawn Sanders, the city’s volunteer coordinator, said. “After we train them, they’ll be in a position to enlist volunteers and show them how to build and maintain our trail system.”

They’ll learn a lot of the basics from Washington Trails Association volunteers who’ll be working at Evans Creek

Preserve in April. The Trail Steward recruits will then attend a project management class put on by the city. By this summer, the city plans to use the novice Trail Stewards on a new connector trail at Evans Creek Preserve. The new trail will lead down to the Preserve from a new parking lot and access point along Sahalee Way.

“We would love to build our roster of Trail Stewards,” Sanders said. “For the right person, it’s really satisfying work and a very important piece of our long-term trail effort.”

For full details, contact Sanders at 425-295-0556 or [dsanders@sammamish.us](mailto:dsanders@sammamish.us). Volunteers must pass a background check. Applications must be in by the end of March.



*Volunteers take a breather at Evans Creek Preserve.*

## Daphne Robinson leaves arts commission

### AFTER 11 YEARS OF SERVICE, TWO-TIME CHAIR TAKES A BREAK

During the past eleven years, the Sammamish arts Commission has grown from a simple, exploratory idea into a fully functioning, highly productive cultural arts organization. And much of the credit very deservedly goes to Daphne Robinson.

“Daphne was there at the beginning, helping to form the Arts Commission and becoming one of its key members back in 2003,” City Manager Ben Yazici said. “She’s served as chair for five of the eleven years she’s been on the commission. It’s hard to think of

the arts in our city without thinking of Daphne.”

In addition to serving as chair, Robinson is also credited with bringing fiscal order to the commission, successfully authoring grants worth \$40,000 in arts funding, and forging productive relationships with the Chamber of Commerce, the Sammamish EX3 Teen Center and the Sammamish library

“She really pushed us forward,” Yazici said. “We’re going to miss her.”



*Daphne Robinson*

## Correction!

The city’s winter Rec Guide contained an incorrect date for the Sammamish Kiwanis

### *Jumpin’ Jive to Thrive*

event at EX3 Teen Center. The correct date and time is:

**Saturday  
March 1  
7-10 p.m.**

**825 228th Ave. N.E.**

# CITY CALENDAR

## FEBRUARY

*Saturday, Feb. 1*

“Build It” Sammamish  
LEGO Event, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

*Tuesday, Feb. 4*

City Council/Planning Commission  
Joint meeting, 6:30 p.m.

*Wednesday, Feb. 5*

Parks and Recreation Commission  
Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

*Tuesday, Feb. 11*

City Council/Planning Commission  
Joint Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

*Wednesday, Feb. 12*

Sammamish Youth Board Mtg, 6 p.m.

*Monday, Feb. 17*

Washington’s Birthday, City offices closed

*Thursday, Feb. 20*

Planning Commission mini-retreat  
6:30-8 p.m., City Hall

*Thursday, Feb. 20 - Saturday, Feb. 22*

City Council Retreat  
Suncadia Lodge

*Monday, Feb. 24*

Arts Commission Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

## MARCH

*Saturday, Mar. 1*

“Make it a Clay Day”  
Special Arts Sammamish, 1-3 p.m.  
EX3 Boys and Girls Club

*Tuesday, Mar. 4*

City Council Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

*Wednesday, Mar. 5*

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

*Thursday, Mar. 6*

Planning Commission Mt, 6:30 p.m.

*Tuesday, Mar. 11*

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

*Monday, Mar. 17*

City Council Meeting,  
6:30 p.m.  
Arts Commission Meeting,  
6:30 p.m.

*Tuesday, Mar. 18*

Simple Measures  
“The Krishnaswami-Salman Duo”,  
7:30-9 p.m.  
Sammamish Presbyterian Church

*Wednesday, Mar. 19*

Sammamish Youth Board Meeting,  
6 p.m.

*Thursday, Mar. 20*

Planning Commission Meeting,  
6:30 p.m.

### 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.

## Sammamish Symphony Orchestra performs “Northern Lights”

*Sunday  
February 23  
2 p.m.*

*Eastlake  
Performing  
Arts Theater*

*400 228th  
Ave. N.E.  
Sammamish*



*Thursday  
February 27  
7:30 p.m.*

*Theater at  
Meydenbauer  
Center*

*11100 N.E  
6th Street  
Bellevue*

*For more information, go to [SammamishSymphony.org](http://SammamishSymphony.org).*



801 - 228th Avenue SE  
Sammamish, WA 98075

PRSR STD  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
REDMOND, WA  
PERMIT NO.312

ECRWSS

POSTAL CUSTOMER

**SAMMAMISH CITY COUNCIL**



*Tom Vance  
Mayor*



*Kathy Huckabay  
Deputy Mayor*



*Don Gerend  
Councilmember*



*Bob Keller  
Councilmember*



*Tom Odell  
Councilmember*



*Ramiro Valderrama  
Councilmember*



*Nancy Whitten  
Councilmember*

**Beware of stormwater ponds in winter!**



Residents should keep children and pets away from stormwater ponds throughout the year, but especially when cold weather creates a layer of ice. In Sammamish, the ice is rarely thick enough to support weight, and quickly gives way, creating a wet, cold and dangerous situation.

**CITY OF SAMMAMISH OFFICES**

801 228th Ave. SE, Sammamish, WA 98075  
Phone: 425-295-0500 • Fax: 425-295-0600

[www.sammamish.us](http://www.sammamish.us)

- Tom Vance, Mayor**  
tvance@sammamish.us
- Kathy Huckabay, Deputy Mayor**  
khuckabay@sammamish.us
- Don Gerend, Councilmember**  
dgerend@sammamish.us
- Bob Keller, Councilmember**  
bkeller@sammamish.us
- Tom Odell, Councilmember**  
todell@sammamish.us
- Ramiro Valderrama**  
rvalderrama@sammamish.us
- Nancy Whitten, Councilmember**  
nwhitten@sammamish.us

- Ben Yazici City Manager
- Lyman Howard Deputy City Manager
- Kamuron Gurol Com Dev Dir/Asst City Mgr
- Jessi Bon Parks & Rec Director
- Joe Guinasso Finance Director
- Laura Philpot Public Works Director
- Melonie Anderson City Clerk
- Nathan Elledge Police Chief
- Wes Collins Fire Chief
- Michael Kenyon City Attorney

**Newsletter suggestions or concerns?**  
**Contact Communications Mgr Tim Larson**  
425-295-0555  
[tlarson@sammamish.us](mailto:tlarson@sammamish.us)