

# SAMMAMISH

ISSUE 119

CITY NEWSLETTER

MAY 2012

## City's financial picture stays strong CONTINUED FINANCIAL HEALTH DUE TO SEVERAL FACTORS

These days, Joe Guinasso is among the rarest of creatures – a finance director who enjoys presenting reports to his City Council.

And why not? Despite a sluggish national economy, and recurring news stories about cities in trouble, Guinasso's presentation in the Council chamber on April 16 left the whole room smiling.

The headlines: Sammamish is one of only six cities in the state with an AAA bond rating from Standard & Poor's, there's very little debt on the books, and the ending fund balance at the end of 2012 is expected to total \$37 million.

"That is a great accomplishment for our community," City Manager Ben Yazici said. "Our residents have asked for prudent financial practices, and our City Councils have always delivered."

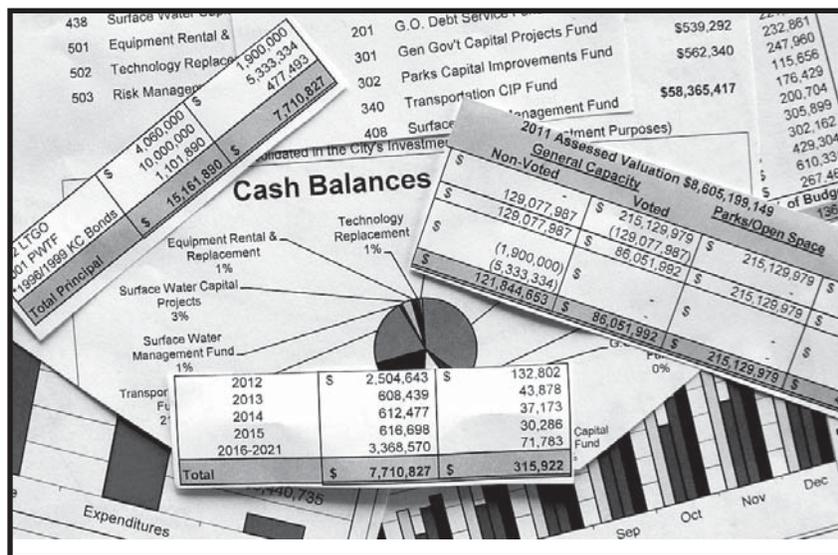
Guinasso, hired as the city's new finance director in September, is impressed with the city's financial posture.

"Different cities face different challenges," Guinasso

said. "But it's clear Sammamish has done a good job of staying healthy during tough financial times."

Asked to explain the city's good fortune, Guinasso pinpointed several key factors:

- **Conservative budgeting:** Going back to incorporation in 1999, the marching orders from the City Council have always been clear – Sammamish will live within its means. Even when times were good, the city didn't become overconfident or loose with taxpayer dollars. The city concentrated on roads, parks and other infrastructure deficits. When the economy slowed down, the city adjusted by slowing its spending.
- **Very low debt levels:** Currently, the city has two debts on the books. One of those, \$2 million on bonds the city issued to help pay for the Sammamish Commons property, will be paid off by the end of this year, the earliest time possible. The only other debt is \$5 million on a 2001 Public Works Trust Fund loan for major improvements to



See FINANCE, pg. 4

# It's springtime in Sammamish!

As I drove home this past weekend after helping to throw out the first pitch for a couple of Little League games to begin the season,



*Tom Odell  
Mayor*

I observed many of our residents enjoying walks in our beautiful city and I was again reminded that spring really is here!

We got off lightly this past winter save for one really good cold snap and a snow storm that tested the ability of city staff to keep main arterials passable during the worst of it (They did a very good job!).

The end of winter seems to be ahead of schedule and while there is still lots of snow in the passes for the skiers and snowboarders, the lawnmowers and baseball fields have begun competing with winter sports for the leisure time of Sammamish's residents.

Spring brings with it soft ground. If you walk next to roads with soft shoulders, you've probably noticed that.

But even where there are sidewalks, the saturated soil underneath can present problems, especially if vehicles are parked with their wheels directly on the sidewalk.

Sidewalks aren't as sturdy as the road surface. If you put your car wheels on a thin sidewalk when the

soil underneath is saturated and soft, you're asking for trouble. As a result, this is the time of year when many of our sidewalks suffer a lot of damage.

Pickup trucks and service vehicles can do the most damage because of their weight, but cars repeatedly parked in the same spot in an effort to avoid traffic can, over time, also wreck sidewalks.

I am writing to you about this because the city budgets around \$100,000 a year to repair sidewalks. A lot of that money (yours and mine) could be saved if we just kept our wheels on the road! I would also like to remind everyone that parking cars, trucks, or other vehicles on city



sidewalks is illegal.

Failed concrete usually results in uneven surfaces and can cause pedestrians (for whom the sidewalks were built in the first place) to trip, with the result often being somewhere between a skinned knee and a concussion. It could happen to you, especially in the evening or after dark.

Recently I took a picture of two

large vehicles parked on the sidewalk in my neighborhood. They were obstructing a big chunk of the sidewalk, which is a concern because this was on a walking route home for many children who attend a neighboring school and who do not have bus service.

Frequently, this kind of parking can result in kids, parents, and people who are just out for a walk having to deviate from the sidewalk and move onto the street to get past the improperly positioned vehicle! This is a dangerous situation and obviously puts youngsters and adults alike unnecessarily at risk.

If you have perhaps slipped into a habit of using the sidewalks as additional parking space in an effort to get further out of the flow of traffic, then please stop and think, not only about the cost of repairs but also about the inconvenience and safety issues created for pedestrians – both young and old – who are really the intended users.

Similarly, if you see someone who is visiting your house, please remind them that our sidewalks are intended for people, not vehicles, and ask that they reposition their car or truck.

Thank you for your interest! Have a great spring and summer!



## Sammamish Farmers Market opens May 16

**MARKET WILL OPEN AND CLOSE ONE HOUR EARLIER: 3 P.M. TO 7 P.M.**

The formula will remain the same – music, sunshine, and lots of fresh product – but the parking lot will fill up a bit earlier this summer. That’s because the fifth season of the Sammamish Farmers Market has new hours: 3-7 p.m.

That schedule will hold all the way until Oct. 3, the market’s last day. As usual, the markets will come along every Wednesday.

The one exception is July 4, a Wednesday that will see City Hall Plaza and all of Sammamish Commons occupied by throngs of Independence Day celebrants.

Juliana Pash, the market

manager, says the market has added two new farmers to the mix, further enriching the menu of options.

The market is staged by the Sammamish Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the city of Sammamish. It is also receives sponsorship support from Evergreen Medical.

“Wednesdays at City Hall are always nice in the summer,” City Manager Ben Yazici said. “It’s great to see the community come out, support the vendors, and enjoy themselves at City Hall Plaza.”

For more information on the weekly event, go to [www.sammamishfarmersmarket.org](http://www.sammamishfarmersmarket.org).



*2011 Farmers Market*

## Design alternatives for donated park land reviewed

Thanks to a generous resident, 51 acres of open space will be donated to the city in three phases over the next several years. Although only one parcel is now in city hands, the planning process is well underway.

On April 25, residents gathered around tables to review design alternatives for two of the three parcels. The Parks Commission and City Council will do their own review this month, and then consider a preferred design in June.

The first 15.9 acre parcel is already open to the public. It’s

temporary name: S.E. Eighth Street Park. A second 20.4 acre parcel, expected to open in three years or so, is also part of the current planning process.

Although only light development of the open space is expected, the features being considered include a pea patch, potting shed, fire pit, art studio and pavillion. Picnic shelters, tree houses and boardwalks are also on the option list.

For more information, go to [www.ci.sammamish.wa.us](http://www.ci.sammamish.wa.us), and click through *projects, parks, and S.E. Eighth*.



*Project Manager Kevin Teague (upper left) welcomes residents.*



*With alternative designs on the table, residents share their thoughts.*

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

228th Avenue. The interest rate on the Trust Fund loan is one half of one percent.

- **Steady property tax revenue:** As a relatively affluent community, Sammamish generates substantial property tax revenue. It accounts for 61 percent of the city's total revenue. Sales tax, by comparison, accounts for only 7 percent. The result: When the bad economy hit, cities that relied more heavily on sales tax saw a bigger dip in their revenue. Although it's usually recommended that cities have a more diversified tax base than Sammamish features, one advantage the city enjoys is the relatively low volatility of property tax revenue.
- **Being a contract city:** Sammamish doesn't have its own police or fire department. It contracts with the King County Sheriff's Office for police services and pays an annual fee to be part of Eastside Fire & Rescue, a regional fire consortium. The city also pays King County for a variety of other services, including animal control and some infrastructure maintenance.
- **Use of consultants:** The city has only 67 full-time employees. Instead of beefing up the staff to handle greater duties, the city hires consultants on an "as-needed" basis. Although consultants are paid well, their short-term contracts are a lot less expensive than the salary and benefit burden an expanded staff would produce. The city's substantial use of seasonal workers also helps in this regard.
- **Making hard choices:** When Sammamish became a city in 1999, it inherited a shortage of roads, parks and other basic needs that had to be addressed. The list was long. Although the city invested aggressively and started marking items off the list, the pace slowed down when the economy slowed down. Capital projects were deferred or reconsidered. Other initiatives were put on the back burner. The city made hard choices, focusing primarily on "needs" rather than "wants."
- **Benefiting from improved revenues:** Thanks to an uptick in the local economy, the city took in \$3.7 million more revenue than expected in 2011. Property sales accelerated, boosting real estate excise taxes (REET). Development also picked up, generating more permit and impact fees. This improved revenue

## Why is city rated AAA?

ONLY FIVE OTHER WASHINGTON CITIES  
RECEIVE S&P'S TOP BOND RATING

The reasons, per S&P's summary report:

- **Strong financial policies and practices, including a minimum reserve policy**
- **Track record of maintaining a very strong financial position**
- **Demonstrated willingness to respond to economic conditions to maintain structural balance**
- **Low overall debt burden relative to market value**
- **High-income, primarily residential tax base**
- **Maintenance of an operating forecasting model**
- **A relatively low level of funding interdependence with federal government**

picture is expected to continue in 2012.

The city, which operates on a biennial budget, will be putting together the 2013-2014 budget later this year. Yazici says he's confident the tradition of prudent financial planning will continue.

"Keeping things on track is an ongoing process," Yazici said. "The economy never gets so good that you can stop being careful. There are always trend lines that require adjustments. Fortunately, our City Council and city staff have a very good history in that regard."

## Kokanee release draws crowd

For a Thursday afternoon, it was pretty exciting along Laughing Jacobs Creek. King County Executive Dow Constantine was there along with some federal officials and a throng of local movers and shakers who take a particular interest in fish.

But the most important visitors were the young Kokanee salmon – fry, they call them – who were released into the creek to replenish a dangerously diminished supply.

Kokanee are a land-locked species native to the Lake Sammamish watershed. They complete their entire life cycle in fresh water, maturing in Lake Sammamish and spawning in local streams.



*King County Executive Dow Constantine (left) joined Councilmember Don Gerend and Mayor Tom Odell at the release.*

Kokanee are very similar to sockeye salmon in some respects, but they're much smaller – measur-



*Children release Kokanee fry into Laughing Jacobs Creek.*

ing 12 to 24 inches at maturity – and never make it out to the ocean.

This Third Annual Kokanee Fry release was intended to strengthen their numbers and diminish the chance that an unfortunate event, of either natural or human origin, might lead to the complete eradication of native Kokanee in this watershed.

## Goats, sheep and llamas sign up for summer work

As part of a pilot project this summer, the city will find out if some select livestock can do a good job reducing vegetation around three stormwater ponds.

Instead of being wacked, weeded and mowed mechanically, the vegetation will be attacked by goats, sheep and llamas. After the project is complete, the city will evaluate their quality of work and relative expense.

The experiment will begin this month and run through October. The ponds are at the Greens at Beaver Crest, Tract N; Renaissance Division 1, Tract A; and Beaver Lake Estates, Tract E.

Project Manager Tawni Dalziel notes that all the ponds will be fenced in to contain the livestock while they're on the job. She also cautions that residents should not try to feed or pet the animals.

For more information, contact Dalziel at 425-295-0500 or [tdalziel@ci.sammamish.wa.us](mailto:tdalziel@ci.sammamish.wa.us).



*As part of a pilot project, goats like these will replace mechanical tools.*

## Solicitors must now register, pass background check

It's an uncomfortable moment – you look out the peephole, see a stranger on the porch, and wonder if you should open the door.

To alleviate some of that uneasiness, the City Council approved a new ordinance last month regulating solicitors who walk through neighborhoods knocking on doors.

Among other things, the new regulations require the following:

- Solicitors must apply for a license from the city. The \$30 license fee is non-refundable.
- Solicitors must show their city license when they solicit someone.
- Solicitors must undergo a background check.

- Monday through Friday, solicitors must limit their activities to between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m.

**No  
Solicitors**

- On Saturday and Sunday, they must limit their activities to between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.
- A “No Solicitors” sign must be honored.
- No solicitor has the right to a stationary location in the public right-of-way.

While some organizations are legally exempt from the licensing requirement, they must still carry a city-issued card. They are also subject to all other aspects of the ordinance. Any violation of the ordinance is a misdemeanor.

### Do's and Don'ts:

- Ask to see the solicitor's city-issued license.
- Never invite a solicitor inside your home.
- To prevent identity theft, don't give the solicitor a check, credit card or any other personal information.
- If a solicitor won't leave the premises when asked or makes you uncomfortable, call 9-1-1.

## Puget Sound Starts Here!

Cleaning up Puget Sound is everybody's business, and it's a year-round job, but May has officially been designated as “Puget Sound Starts Here” month.

So, you're invited to take part in this regional effort to keep our waterways clean and raise everybody's consciousness about the importance of keeping the Puget Sound healthy and beautiful. Here are some things you can do:

- Come visit the city Stormwater Team and other members of Public Works at the Farmers Market on May 23. Learn more about stormwater pollution and what you can do to prevent it.
- Go to [www.pugetsoundstartshere.org](http://www.pugetsoundstartshere.org) and click on the “In your local area” tab for opportunities to contribute.
- “Like” PSSH on Facebook and Twitter.
- Purchase tickets to “Puget Sound Starts Here” night at Safeco Field. Come see the Mariners play on the evening of Saturday, May 5. Discount tickets start at \$11 and the purchase price includes a PSSH Night t-shirt.

## Public hearing on regulation of home businesses wraps up May 14

With a high number of businesses operating out of Sammamish homes, the City Council is considering new regulations intended to strike a balance between specific standards and a more flexible approach that would allow city staff to make judgments based on individual circumstances. A public hearing on the issue will wrap up on May 14.

“We're trying to take the best ideas from peer cities, our own experience working with neighbors and home business operators, and blend all that into a code that's more clear and more appropriate for Sammamish,” Kamuron Gurol, the department of community development director, said.

The Planning Commission, which studied the issue in 2011 and 2012, passed along its recommendations to the Council this year. By the time the Council's public hearing ends on May 14, it's hoped all stakeholders – business operators, neighbors and other residents – will have had a chance to weigh in.

“As always, it's a matter of balance,” Gurol said. “These areas are neighborhoods first, but home businesses are also very important to our community.”

# CITY CALENDAR

## MAY

*Tuesday, May 1*

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

*Wednesday, May 2*

-City Council Council Office Hour  
5:30 p.m.

-Parks & Rec Comm. Mtg, 6:30 p.m.

*Thursday, May 3*

-Planning Commission Mtg, 6 p.m.

*Tuesday, May 8*

-City Council/Planning Commission  
Joint Study Session, 6:30 p.m.

*Wednesday, May 9*

Tour of Beaver Lake  
Management District, 6-8 p.m.

*Thursday, May 10*

-Community Garden Steering  
Committee Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

*Monday, May 14*

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

*Tuesday, May 15*

-Donate Blood at City Hall  
10 a.m.-4 p.m.

*Wednesday, May 16*

-Sammamish Youth Board Meeting,  
6 p.m.

*Thursday, May 17*

-Planning Commission Mtg, 6 p.m.

*Saturday, May 19*

-Sammamish Walks,  
10 a.m.-noon  
Pine Lake Park

*Monday, May 28*

-Memorial Day  
City offices closed

## JUNE

*Tuesday, Jun. 5*

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

*Wednesday, Jun. 6*

-City Council Council Office Hour  
5:30 p.m.  
-Parks and Rec Comm Mtg, 6:30 p.m.

*Tuesday, Jun. 12*

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

*Wednesday, Jun. 13*

-Samm. Youth Board Mtg, 6 p.m.

*Thursday, Jun. 14*

-Planning Commission Mtg, 6 p.m.  
-Community Garden Steering  
Committee Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

*Friday, Jun. 15*

-Teen Fest, 1-9 p.m.

*Saturday, Jun. 16*

-Sammamish Walks  
10 a.m.-noon  
Evans Creek Preserve

*Monday, Jun. 18*

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

*Thursday, Jun. 28*

-Planning Commission Mtg, 6 p.m.

*Friday, June 29*

“The Journey” art exhibit begins  
City Hall gallery, 8:30 a.m. to 5 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.

## Visit new webpages to learn about summer fun!

With summer just around the corner, the city is preparing its usual generous menu of special events to make this sunny season one of the best ever. And to make it easier to plan your schedule, the city has created brand-new webpages for each event.

Just go to the city website ([www.ci.sammamish.wa.us](http://www.ci.sammamish.wa.us)), choose “events” on the left side of the homepage, and then click on “special events.”



The fun isn't far away. TeenFest (June 15), the Fourth of July, and the Summer Concerts (beginning July 12) are coming up fast. And there's much more after that.

The webpage for each event will give residents a clear idea of what to expect, what the family-friendly features are, and all the other details they'll need to make an appropriate choice. The webpages will also help potential volunteers and sponsors make all the proper contacts.



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*Don Gerend  
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*Ramiro Valderrama  
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*Tom Vance  
Councilmember*



*Nancy Whitten  
Councilmember*

# Call to Artists:

## Sammamish Arts Fair October 13, 14

Sponsored by  
the Sammamish Arts Commission

Submission Deadline:  
May 15

For more information, go to  
[www.sammamishartsfair.wordpress.com](http://www.sammamishartsfair.wordpress.com)

### CITY OF SAMMAMISH OFFICES

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

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

**Tom Odell, Mayor**

[todell@ci.sammamish.wa.us](mailto:todell@ci.sammamish.wa.us)

**John James, Deputy Mayor**

[jjames@ci.sammamish.wa.us](mailto:jjames@ci.sammamish.wa.us)

**John Curley, Councilmember**

[jcurley@ci.sammamish.wa.us](mailto:jcurley@ci.sammamish.wa.us)

**Don Gerend, Councilmember**

[dgerend@ci.sammamish.wa.us](mailto:dgerend@ci.sammamish.wa.us)

**Ramiro Valderrama, Councilmember**

[rvalderrama-aramayo@ci.sammamish.wa.us](mailto:rvalderrama-aramayo@ci.sammamish.wa.us)

**Tom Vance, Councilmember**

[tvance@ci.sammamish.wa.us](mailto:tvance@ci.sammamish.wa.us)

**Nancy Whitten, Councilmember**

[nwhitten@ci.sammamish.wa.us](mailto:nwhitten@ci.sammamish.wa.us)

Ben Yazici	City Manager
Lyman Howard	Deputy City Manager
Kamuron Guroi	ComDevDir/AsstCityMgr
Joe Guinasso	Finance Director
Laura Philpot	Public Works Director
Jessi Richardson	Parks & Rec Director
Mike Sauerwein	Admin Services Director
Melonie Anderson	City Clerk
Nathan Elledge	Police Chief
Wes Collins	Fire Chief
Bruce Disend	City Attorney

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