

STATE OF THE CITY

February 2021

Welcome to 2021 in Mukilteo! I am your Mayor, Jennifer Gregerson, and I am so excited to share my thoughts on the state of our city, along with a little look back on what we have to be proud of and thankful for from 2020. I am so grateful to our other guests, as well. Thank you to Chairwoman Gobin, the Mukilteo Youth Advisory Commission, our Scout Troop 40210 and those adorable preschoolers who delivered the pledge! If we were together in person, I would make sure to give a shout out to our Council and staff in attendance, so, I will offer a virtual wave for Council President Kneller, Council Vice President Champion, and Councilmembers Crawford, Emery, Harris, Khan, and Marine. Thanks also to our amazing team of city employees — not just the leaders you might know, but the leaders throughout our organization. From the patrol officer, to the EMT at your door, the engineer who makes sure our projects are constructed and managed well, the planner who helps us envision our future, the street sweeper, our accountants that get the bills paid, to the crew member making

our parks shine: our team is what makes our city a place to be proud of. Finally, a thank you to my family- my boyfriend Paul, my mom and dad, my sister and brother-in-law and the stars of the family, Westley and Willow, my niece and nephew! I appreciate their endless support.

As we look back at 2020, there are many things for which to be thankful. I so appreciate the tireless efforts of our first responders. Firefighters have donned PPE to enter our homes and carefully and kindly transported patients experiencing COVID symptoms at one of the scariest times in their lives. Our police officers balanced a national conversation about their profession with the best-in-class service that they provide to our community. Our Public Works first responders kept our infrastructure in good repair while keeping themselves healthy and safe, ensuring they are always ready for emergency responses. Our businesses sacrificed in huge, and ongoing ways. They followed the state protocols with our health in mind, while they watched their investments and livelihood go on a severe hold. We must all be grateful for their sacrifice.

We must not forget those that have succumbed to the pandemic. Let us take a moment of silence for the 3 Mukilteans who have died from COVID-19, the 120 currently diagnosed, as well as over 550 who suffered through a diagnosis and may still face the health impacts for years to come.

PAUSE

My duty to lead our city through many crises, during my seven years as Mayor, has been an honor. The pandemic emergency has certainly been the longest crisis we have faced. As our City's steward of the response, I have worked every day to ensure our community, staff and Council were up to speed on our response, as well as the county and national picture. I have made tough choices, along with the support of our team. We have canceled events, reduced services, closed buildings, all while trying to predict the future every month. I am proud of how our City has weathered this storm. We will come out on the other side stronger for it.

In positive news, our city budget ended 2020 on a strong note. We put over \$350,000 back into savings, and our sales tax came in 6% higher than 2019. Our audit for 2019 was completed, and it was a clean report- for the 4th year in a row!

Our City expanded transparency in government in new ways this year. Over 1000 people logged in to a Council meeting since our first Zoom meeting in late March (I would have had to look back a decade to reach 1000 attendees to Council meetings in the past!). We further developed our online permitting systems and improved accounting to better process invoices and payments. Though our doors may not be open, City Hall is open to serve you in new, and in many cases, more effective ways.

We also finished a key project to improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety- new sidewalks now welcome pedestrians along a widened Harbour Pointe Blvd South, a route that is traveled by hundreds of residents as well as our manufacturing and industrial business community every day.

2021 ACTION AGENDA

As we look forward to 2021, I feel hopeful, though I know we have a tough road ahead.

REBUILD SMALL BUSINESSES

Locally owned businesses play a central role in healthy communities and are among the best engines that we have for advancing economic opportunity. Small business ownership has been a pathway to the middle class for generations of Americans.

It will be my priority this year to focus on rebuilding our small businesses. In 2020, we distributed over \$400,000 in grants to over 100 small businesses. Looking forward, we all need to continue to support the restaurants, shops, and other businesses that are the backbone of our community.

We will focus on continuing to make Mukilteo a fabulous place to live and do business- to make sure we have clean streets, safe neighborhoods and business districts, clean beaches and forests, and the most transparent government our City has ever had.

We will seek out businesses to support our existing industrial clusters — such as the aerospace suppliers — as well as the thriving high-tech manufacturing companies tucked away in our industrial district.

I will ensure that we continue to serve as a communications hub, connecting small businesses with resources and education.

For those that are successful enough or have a need to expand or change their footprint, our planning and engineering services stand ready to shepherd them through our permitting process.

The Chamber of Commerce is a key partner and I am so grateful for their efforts. I'd like to turn to their Executive Director Kandace Barnes, to hear more about their work in 2021.

SENIORS

Turning to another topic, the Mukilteans who count themselves as seniors. 16% of our residents are over 65, up from 10% seven years ago. Those 3400 Mukilteans are a key to our community's vibrancy and deserve support and care. When

our Community Center can reopen, I look forward to restarting our senior programs, and taking a good look at how to serve our seniors in the long run. 2020 may have brought the closure of other cities' senior centers and senior programming, but that is not the long-term vision for this community. We need a place for our seniors to create community, to foster energy, and to enrich their lives. We need Rosehill Community Center to reopen, in April or as soon as it is safe, to once again be the welcoming location for our seniors.

POLICE

In 2020, our Police Department has continued to shine. We have the best detectives- with a track record of solving serious cases. We have the best patrol officers who protect and serve, ready to respond in your time of need.

Our Crime Prevention Division works hard to ensure the safety of our community and are ready and willing to provide a proactive resource for you. I am proud of how connected our Police Department is to our community. This summer will

provide an opportunity to bring National Night Out in August to your door, through visits to neighborhood block parties.

Of course, our officers also see our community members in their most vulnerable situations, as well. Last year, every day and a half a Mukiltean called 911 for help from our Police for an incident of domestic violence. Last year, our officers responded to a call related to suicide or mental health crises every three days. These moments usually happen behind closed doors where those suffering feel alone, like they are the only ones. Other families can too easily forget or even ignore the challenges faced by other members of our community. If you are struggling, know that you have a place in our community, that we have resources to help, and that you are valued. The scourge of violence, substance use disorder, and mental health challenges can be overcome, together.

CLIMATE ACTION

Last year, a motivated and smart group of volunteers developed the City's first Climate Action Plan. I look forward to putting that plan to work this year. I will designate a Climate

Coordinator to advance efforts and provide accountability and coordination between community and city actions. We will look at the wins we can achieve within our city government, including an official policy that commits us to pursuing electric options for our city fleet when available. The Climate Action Plan recommends a policy to limit vehicle idling, particularly at schools and in our ferry holding lanes. I will recommend that the City Council consider adopting this policy. We will also continue to promote the Green Business Certification Program to community businesses and continue to seek ways to lower our community's carbon footprint.

DIVERSITY

I am excited to also share that our City has formed our first Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission. A talented group of individuals will represent our entire community, including voices very rarely heard in Council Chambers. I look forward to bringing their perspectives to city operations and policies. I appreciate the leadership on this initiative of our most diverse City Council in our community's history. A quarter of our community is non-white, with Asians making up the largest

percentage of that. In our City, one in five residents speaks a language other than English at home, with the top languages being Korean, Chinese and Spanish. Think about your neighborhood- every fifth house is speaking a language other than English. We can do better connecting and listening to those families, and the DEI Commission is our first step towards that.

HISTORY

The first part of my 2021 action agenda that I shared was to rebuild our small businesses. Rebuilding and supporting our small business community is a key priority for me, as it was at Mukilteo's founding. Mukilteo founders Morris Frost and Jacob Fowler saw a business potential at Point Elliott, our waterfront, and opened a trading post and hotel here.

A few years in, they faced dark times, just like our community has. One hundred and sixty years ago, in November, Fowler said, "It is lonesome up here and very quiet. Trade is very dull, but I live in hopes of it being better one of these days."

In response, they worked to diversify their commercial base- for a time they shipped duck feathers and wild cranberries. Salted, smoked, and dried salmon was exported and before long the first salmon cannery on Puget Sound was established, one of the earliest of its kind on Puget Sound. The first shipbuilding in the new county was initiated when Frost's *Gazelle* was launched in 1863 and Frost and Fowler were soon operating their own small fleet of three sailing ships. In 1870, one of the region's first lager breweries, utilizing a water-powered mill, was built.

Decades after Morris and Frost brought their entrepreneurial spirit to Mukilteo, businesses came to Mukilteo with our Whidbey Island ferry connection in mind.

Restaurants and ferry landings have long been good companions and the Mukilteo ferry landing was no exception. First, a tiny lunchroom offered food, fishing tackle, and bait, becoming a part of the landscape by the 1920s, evolving into Taylor's and now Ivar's Mukilteo Landing today.

The ancestor of a future economic base on the tank farm was the Bayview Hotel, which was sited on what is now City property, identified for future commercial development, just west of the new terminal ticket booths. The Bay View Hotel neighbored Frost and Fowler's store and saloon. It offered a grocery store and a second-floor restaurant, and was an essential gathering place from its arrival in the early 1860s through the early 1900s. Later owners worked to develop it into a resort, with a dance pavilion, croquet court, and outfitting for sailing, fishing and hunting. Today, it costs a bit more than their rates of \$2 per day to stay at the Silver Cloud on our waterfront, but both hotels welcomed visitors to our community with spirit!

WATERFRONT

Mukilteo's historically prosperous business district along Park Avenue now has a new, brighter future with the opening the ferry terminal. City-owned property as well as the eastern end of Mukilteo's waterfront, owned by the Tulalip Tribes, provide new entrepreneurial opportunities. We will encourage

waterfront redevelopment to follow our adopted master plan with an eye towards locally owned small businesses.

Speaking of the waterfront, though you might have visited the beautiful new terminal, it's clear there is more to be done. This summer, the opening of the new access road will allow for Front Street to serve all of Mukilteo again, and not just those in transit to and from Whidbey. With state funding that we hope to win this spring, we will continue moving towards an opening of Japanese Gulch Creek to salmon and sea life as well as walkers traveling a new boardwalk leading from the ferry terminal through this new estuary eastward. State support will also help us create the promenade's connection to Edgewater Beach Park. That will create that pedestrian loop that we envisioned when I broke through bureaucratic red tape and made sure the interim access was opened in my first six months in office in 2014.

Private owners are slated to develop the old ferry holding lanes, and I am hopeful that future years will bring a new restaurant and shops along Front Street facing Ivar's. A clustered

waterfront business community is what made early Mukilteo successful, and it can do that again for us.

HARBOUR REACH

Of course, we have another exciting change happening in 2021 that was also decades in the making. The Harbour Reach Corridor will open in June, connecting neighborhoods on Beverly Park with our Harbour Pointe community and resources for the first time ever. I hope you'll join me in a safe way on your feet, on bikes and in cars when it opens!

Finally, the other big change in 2021 will be new sidewalks that will be built along 76th Street. Families will finally be able to send their kids to OV Middle School and Mukilteo Elementary safely. We have funded our pedestrian and bike program this year, so I look forward to future projects as we set aside funds to ensure all Mukilteo families can feel safe and be healthy and active in their neighborhoods.

CLOSING

Although we faced unfamiliar territory in 2020, I am hopeful that some of the clouds are clearing as we head into 2021 here

in Mukilteo. I have hope that our businesses will not only stabilize but thrive again. I have hope that our residents and community members will feel safer, and that health and mental wellness will improve. I believe that we will be able to gather again. I deeply appreciate all of you who are taking every necessary step to help us get there. Thank you for being a part of what makes Mukilteo such a wonderful place to live.