SEATTLE KING COUNTY REALTORS®

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Issues & Impacts

Seattle King County REALTORS® is working to ensure that public policies support homeownership and your business's bottom line. Contact Governmental & Public Affairs Director David Crowell, dcrowell@nwrealtor.com, with any local legislative issues that may need our attention. **The next issue will be released in July 2017.**

In this issue:

Seattle City Council Approves University District Upzone --- 5,000 market rate units anticipated!

The Seattle City Council took an important step in Seattle's HALA (Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda) Grand Bargain by passing the University District Upzone.

The rezone will direct growth to the blocks near the Sound Transit (opening in 2021) and the UW campus. Heights for some residential projects may exceed 320' at the core and transition down to 30' in residential zones. Five thousand (5,000) new market rate units are anticipated in addition to approximately 600-900 subsidized units.

The HALA Grand Bargain, approved by the city council last year, provided framework legislation that allows for taller buildings (and more housing units) within upzoned areas. In exchange, developers would be required to set aside affordable units or pay a fee to help build them elsewhere.

Seattle King County REALTORS® participated in the public hearing and has encouraged the council to adopt the upzone package as a critical measure to address the housing supply crisis and a prudent complement to the region's tremendous investment in light rail. The University District has suffered for many years with struggling retail, crime and declining housing quality throughout much of the area.

Additional features of the upzone include new planned open spaces, preservation of historic buildings, and building design standards to promote an attractive and welcoming streetscape.

The upzone proposal was controversial. Some councilmembers attempted to change the terms of the upzones to increase the fees or the number of units set aside for affordable housing. We expect

similar opposition as additional neighborhood upzones are debated.

Seattle King County REALTORS® and our HALA coalition partners have expressed concern that changes to what was agreed to in the HALA Grand Bargain will chill housing unit production; therefore we urged the council to honor the Grand Bargain and resist requests to further increase the fees and the number of units set aside for affordable housing. Already, there is an indication that some of the proposed rates may be too high thereby adversely affecting housing production. Additional increases will further threaten the ability to meet housing goals.

SKCR President Sam DeBord told the council that Realtors are extremely concerned about the lack of housing supply within the city and that HALA's goal of producing 20,000 affordable homes and 30,000 market rate homes over the next ten years is a critical step in the solution to our housing supply crisis.

Next up: A series of committee briefings on the Downtown/South Lake Union rezone will begin during late February.

Advocacy to Encourage Greater Housing Options: Seattle King County REALTORS® Weighs in on Kenmore's Housing Strategy

Seattle King County REALTORS® testified before the Kenmore City Council to encourage the Planning Commission's work on a housing strategy to increase housing options in the city.

Specifically, Seattle King County REALTORS® urged the council to support the Planning Commission's recommendation to explore a greater mix of ADUs (accessory dwelling units) attached to the primary residence or detached and greater flexibility in single-family neighborhoods for small scale housing like cottages and duplexes.

Seattle King County REALTORS® asked the city to explore a code provision recently adopted in Shoreline --- Unit Lot Development (ULD). *Editors note: see Shoreline story*.

On the matter of condominium development, SKCR requested the city support efforts at the state level to address condominium construction liability. Current law almost guarantees the developers of new condo projects will be sued --- often for minor defects that are easily remedied. The result is fewer condos are being built, leaving fewer affordable pathways for prospective homebuyers to get into homeownership or for empty nesters looking to downsize.

Kenmore's housing strategy will be refined over the next several months. SKCR will continue its efforts to encourage the city to allow more housing options.

Shoreline Takes Action to Increase Smaller Unit Housing Supply

The Shoreline City Council recently passed a package of code amendments that included Unit Lot Development (ULD).

Seattle King County REALTORS® encouraged the council to adopt the ULD because it will enable smaller-scale townhouse, rowhouse, cottage, and single family-attached projects to be built with less

cost, less time and less risk. It's a great strategy for quality infill, and, as mentioned above, it comes at a time when new supply is desperately needed.

ULD divides land for the purpose of selling smaller scale housing units, but does not create separate legal building sites. The cost savings associated with development of several units on a single building lot enables smaller-scale townhouse, rowhouse, cottage, and single family-attached projects to be built with less cost, less time and less risk. It can be a helpful strategy for quality infill. In addition, ULDs avoid the construction liability issues and required insurance associated with condominium development which has severely reduced the number of condominium projects within the region.

Realtors Discuss Housing Strategies with City of Issaquah during development moratorium

In September 2016, Issaquah City Council enacted a development moratorium to address a range of growth issues, including:

- Architectural fit with the community
- Urban design elements
- Vertical mixed use
- Affordable housing
- Parking
- Visions for each Central Issaquah district

In November, 2016, the City Council excluded from the moratorium small projects consisting of four or fewer residential units or non-residential development (including existing and new) not to exceed 3,000 square feet of total building area. In addition, the moratorium excludes:

- Properties covered by approved development agreements
- Transit-oriented development
- Essential public facilities, such as fire stations and hospitals
- Publicly-funded schools and Village Theater
- Projects involving the sale and development of land currently owned by the City and public capital projects
- Remodels and tenant improvements
- Single-family homes on lots already vested through platting approvals
- Affordable housing (with affordable units representing at least 40 percent of the total units proposed)
- Emergency repairs or construction necessitated by a natural disaster such as fire, flooding, earthquake or other similar cause

In January of this year, **Seattle King County REALTORS® past-President and Issaquah Planning Commissioner Joan Probala** convened a focus group of Realtors to offer the City of Issaquah's Development Services Department our perspective on the housing market, consumer preferences and strategies to increase housing supply within the city, while preserving community character. SKCR Member input was well received by staff including our encouragement that swift action is needed to create new market-rate housing supply.

SKCR members also suggested that the city guard against the idea that affordability is achieved only through subsidy. Members explained that greater housing supply in response to demand is essential to creating housing affordability for median income earners.

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Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) Reaches Agreement with Small Cities on Housing

As reported last year, REALTORS® have been supporting efforts by small cities to allow more housing for working families. The supply of homes is far less than what's needed to meet the actual market demand evident to everyone in the region. As we well know, the result of this demand is skyrocketing home prices and rental rates that families can't afford.

Since last summer, the PSRC has attempted to force small cities to reduce affordable housing opportunities. Cities attempting to grow beyond their housing targets were threatened with a withholding of transportation dollars. PSRC was viewing housing targets as a ceiling or cap on growth rather than a floor or minimum amount of zoned housing capacity in their comprehensive plans.

Making matters worse, the PSRC was basing its actions on stale, inaccurate data from 2012, rather than accounting for the current real estate market realities and the severe challenges faced by buyers in this market.

Puget Sound Regional Council

In the past several weeks, the PRSC reached a compromise with the small cities called the *Alternative Path to Full Certification for Small Cities*.

Seattle King County REALTORS® is hopeful the compromise will offer some relief to small cities. Cities will be eligible for conditional certification of their comprehensive plans and will preserve their eligibility for PRSC transportation funding. We are monitoring the details of the compromise and its implementation out of concern that the deal could be restrictive.

SKCR will stand with small cities to gain the allowance to grow in the manner they desire and maintain a reasonable level of self-determination.

Auburn – New $20 Car Tab Approved by Transportation Benefit District

The Auburn City Council, sitting as the newly created Auburn Transportation Benefit District, has agreed to impose a new $20 vehicle licensing fee to pay for both the administration of the District, and for new transportation projects. Deputy Mayor Largo Wales opposed adopting the fee without sending the measure to voters, something the legislature expressly authorized when it allowed cities to create the Districts.

Enumclaw – No Stormwater Utility, For Now

City administrators want to implement a new stormwater utility, in part to get the Department of Ecology off their backs. But Enumclaw City Councilmembers have rejected the idea, at least for now. Creation of a new utility, with a new set of fees, was part of Mayor Liz Reynolds' proposed 2017 budget. The notion drew criticism during a Nov. 14 budget hearing. Businesses objected because they

already pay a B&O tax which they characterize as unfair.

In August 2015, the state's Department of Ecology determined Enumclaw was not in compliance with accepted guidelines for managing stormwater. Since that time, Enumclaw has taken steps to mitigate the situation, including hiring an employee, adopting a stormwater management plan and testing the water in both Boise and Newaukum creeks.

The city currently funds $400,000 in stormwater management with money from the street budget, but meeting those un-funded mandates comes at the expense of city road maintenance projects. For that reason, the topic of adopting a stormwater utility will likely remain a discussion topic for Mayor Liz Reynolds during the remainder of 2017.

Kent – Water and Sewer Rates Going Up

The city of Kent plans to increase water and sewer rates to help pay for repairs and upgrades to the city's water and sewer systems. Annual repairs and maintenance costs are expected to require $4.5 million for the water system, and $5 million per year for sewer system projects.

The City Council voted unanimously last summer to approve the new rates, which include a cost-of-living increase each year tied to the regional consumer price index.

The increases include $2.75 per month for customers with dedicated fire lines for sprinkler systems, which will bring in an additional $1.6 million this year. Higher sewer rates, including King County's Metro fee, are expected to bring in another $2.2 million.

Residential water rates will increase 5.6% (or $2.12 per month) this year for the average customer with a 3/4-inch meter who uses 700 cubic feet. That rate will increase each year based on the consumer price index, with increases capped at 2.4 percent until 2023, when the hikes will follow the CPI without any cap.

Commercial water rates will go up to $15.60 per month for 3/4-inch meters and 700 cubic feet of use, with correspondingly higher rate increases for larger meters and higher water use.

Homeless Students in King County School Districts

The Office of the Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction has published data on the number of homeless students in each school district during the 2015-2016 School Year.

In King County, the school districts with the highest numbers of homeless students were: Seattle, Highline, Kent, Renton, Shoreline, Federal Way and Lake Washington.

The King County school districts with the lowest numbers of homeless students were: Vashon

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King County School Districts	Number of Homeless Students 2015-16 School Year
Seattle	3,498
Highline	1,195
Kent	559
Renton	506
Shoreline	381
Federal Way	368
Lake Washington	353
Tukwila	349
Auburn	304
Bellevue	249
Northshore	202
Issaquah	117
Enumclaw	105
Snoqualmie Valley	99
Tahoma	59
Riverview	38
Mercer Island	17
Vashon Island	12

Source: http://www.k12.wa.us/HomelessEd/Data.aspx

Island, Mercer Island, Riverview, Tahoma, Snoqualmie Valley, Enumclaw and Issaquah.

The OSPI's office of *Education of Homeless Children and Youth* oversees federal McKinney-Vento competitive grant funding that pays $950,000 annually for training, technical assistance, and monitoring that serve homeless students. This federal grant funding is the only money specifically designated for serving the educational needs of Washington's 32,539 homeless students.

Legal Spotlight

Three Recent Decisions by the Washington State Supreme Court Create Important New Problems for Real Estate

Supreme Court Case # 1 – Loss of "Vesting" Protections

The Washington State Supreme Court (in Olympia) has issued an important decision that reversed the State Court of Appeals in the case of *Snohomish County vs. Pollution Control Hearings Board.*

The Supreme Court's decision affects Washington's **"Vesting Rule"** and could have far-reaching effects by making it much more financially risky for homebuilders who are trying to build new homes, new condominiums and new apartments.

The concept of "vesting" is simple: Once a new construction project is "vested" the government can't change the rules. The specific project is entitled to rely on the rules that were in effect on the date a "completed application" for the project was submitted to the permitting agency (typically the county or the city).

So, even if the rules later change for everyone else who had not yet submitted a completed application, Washington's Vesting Rule allowed a builder to finish building the project under the rules/standards/regulations with which they started.

As a result, once a builder submitted a complete application (to build a new house, for example) nobody could change the rules the builder would have to comply with for that project. The builder was entitled to build it based on the rules that were in-effect on the date the builder submitted a complete application. But if vesting is wiped out, then every time the rules/development regulations are changed, the project must be changed to meet the newly changed rules, even if you are in the middle (or near the end) of constructing your project.

Washington's "Vesting Rule" created a hard and fast "Bright Line" that the government could not cross. But this new decision by the Washington State Supreme Court says, in effect, that the government can change the rules on the builder, and can do so right up to the moment before a certificate of occupancy (or final inspection approval) is issued by the local government...unless the rule the government wants to change is totally a local matter. If the rule or requirement is just a local matter, the existing vesting rule still applies.

What's an entirely "local" matter? There are not a lot of good examples, in part because this particular case involved standards for managing stormwater. Perhaps something like architectural facade

requirements in downtown Leavenworth might be an entirely local issue.

However, if the development regulation, requirement or rule is grounded in a state or federal requirement, Washington's vesting law may no longer provide any protection on those matters. For this reason, the court's decision is likely to result in the effects of the case being far-reaching.

Consider, for example, all the development rules and regulations (besides stormwater management) that are the result of a state or federal mandate, and for which vesting rule protections would no longer apply:

- State Growth Management Act (The GMA mandates countywide planning policies, comprehensive plans, 8 specific elements that must be included in the comprehensive plans, zoning, development regulations, environmental protections, critical areas regulations, etc.)
- State Building Codes
- State Shorelines Management Act
- Federal Clean Air Act
- Federal Clean Water Act
- Federal Endangered Species Act

So, what does that really mean? How will it all work? The answer will likely come in a series of yet-to-be-decided expensive court cases.

But in the meantime, imagine you submitted a completed application to build a house, received a permit, and started construction:

- Assume there is a small "Class 4" wetland on the property (which is the least valuable/important class of wetland), and for which the buffer requirement is 25 feet.
- In an abundance of caution you start building the home 50 feet away from the wetland (instead of just the minimum of 25 feet), which is twice the amount of the required buffer.
- But during construction, after the foundation is poured, the building is weather-tight, all electrical and plumbing work is done and you're getting ready to sheet-rock the interior walls...the state or federal government decides Class 4 wetlands need more protection, and in response the local government increases the minimum Class 4 wetland buffer by an additional 50 feet (increases it from 25 feet, to 75 feet).

Are you going to pick-up the house, put in a new foundation and move the house back an additional 25 feet (assuming you have the room to do so)? Tear it down and start over? Walk away, let it sit there until the government tears it down and sends you the bill?

Or, what if there are new changes to the building codes and sprinkler systems are suddenly required in all new single family construction. You just finished painting the installed drywall. You may have to tear it out, plumb-in sprinklers, install the sprinklers, and then repair the drywall.

Or, you pay for, and install, an HVAC system on your new home. But while the rest of the home is still under construction the government changes the energy efficiency codes/standards and your new HVAC system doesn't qualify. Do you sell the brand new (old) system as scrap metal and buy a new one that meets the standard?

Or, "green" building standards change and you have to have more natural light in the house? You just finished hanging sheet rock. Do you re-frame the stud walls to add more windows so that the project complies with the new development rules?

Not much remains certain or predictable following this unfortunate decision, except this: More changes are likely, they will likely be expensive, and building homes for working families likely just got a whole lot more difficult!

For More Information SEE: http://mrsc.org/Home/Stay-Informed/MRSC-Insight/January-2017/Supreme-Court-Issues-Significant-Vesting-Decision.aspx

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Supreme Court Case #2 - "If You Need a Well, Good Luck!"

REALTORS® and their clients should be aware of a recent State Supreme Court decision that will have a significant impact on the ability of landowners to use new private wells for residential development.

Under this new decision from the Washington State Supreme Court, single private wells for new homes may be denied by local governments for causing impacts to instream flow levels adopted by the Department of Ecology. Whether or not a property has a legal water supply is a legal determination. REALTORS® should not give legal advice regarding whether an undeveloped parcel has adequate water supply.

The decision may be subject to different interpretations by different counties, so it is too soon to tell exactly how the decision will impact building permit applications relying on new private wells for water supply. The decision is likely to have the greatest impact on counties in Western Washington due the type of rules adopted by the Department of Ecology in many Western Washington counties.

The question of whether a proposed water source meets the legal availability requirement in RCW 19.27.097 is a "legal question." REALTORS® should ensure that their clients receive qualified advice on these issues:

- First, advise your client, in writing, to seek the advice of a water specialist (lawyer, hydrogeologist, etc.).
- Second, appropriate vacant land forms should be used to explicitly allocate the duty to investigate legal adequacy of water supply for the property. The statewide purchase agreement advises buyers to insure adequate water supply to the property and Form 22L&A includes contingency language related to confirming water supply.

Background on the Decision:

In Whatcom County v. Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board, No. 91475-3, the Supreme Court ruled that Whatcom County's GMA Comprehensive Plan and development regulations violated the GMA by failing to ensure that new private wells did not impair the Nooksack River Instream Flow regulation adopted by the State Department of Ecology.

The Court further ordered that to meet the legal water availability requirement in the state building code at RCW 19.27.097, local governments must review proposed new private wells for impairment of senior water rights and instream flows. This decision reversed the earlier decision of the Court of Appeals, which held that local government review of water availability must ensure consistency with Department of Ecology regulations – but that local governments are not obligated to exceed the requirements of state regulations.

The decision does not affect wells that are currently in use by existing homes, but likely affects wells that have been drilled but not yet reviewed under RCW 19.27.097.

In the case of the Nooksack Basin Instream Flow Rule (WAC Chapter 173-501), the actual flow levels often do not meet the "minimum flow" level set by the Ecology regulation. However, the instream flow regulation specifically exempts new single domestic wells from any review by the County or State. The exemption in Ecology's Nooksack regulation is consistent with state law, as RCW 90.44.050 exempts new small domestic wells from permit review and thus no impairment review is required.

The Supreme Court's decision makes all new private wells subject to impairment review and directs counties to conduct this review. Washington REALTORS® strongly disagrees with this decision,

as it is directly contrary to the state's water code, Ecology's regulations, and the requirements of the Growth Management Act.

REALTORS®, along with the Building Industry Association of Washington and Washington Farm Bureau, filed an amicus brief in this case supporting Whatcom County, and arguing that state law requires local regulation of water supply to be consistent with – but not exceed – state laws and regulations.

Even though the case originated in Whatcom County, it is likely to impact other counties as the Court's pronouncements regarding the obligation of local governments to review impairment of instream flows do not appear limited to Whatcom County. The regulatory structure in place in Whatcom County is similar to the structure in many other Western Washington counties, and those counties are likely implicated by the decision. While there will be a strong legislative response against the Court's decision, it could take months or years for this decision to be modified or clarified by the Legislature or further litigation.

The Department of Ecology and counties throughout Washington State are currently reviewing the decision to determine what type of water review process will be adopted at the county level to comply with the decision until it can be modified.

For More Information SEE: Whatcom County v. Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board, et al. (aka Whatcom County v. Hirst), No. 91475-3 (Wash. Oct. 6, 2016) and http://www.wcar.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Client-handout-2016117.pdf

Supreme Court Case #3 – "Zombie Properties"

Even now, months after the Washington State Supreme Court handed down its July 2016 decision in the class-action case of ***Jordan v. Nationstar Mortgage LLC***, so-called "zombie properties" continue to be a source of challenges for local governments, as well as for next-door neighbors who may decide to ask their REALTOR® for assistance.

Typically, zombie properties involve a situation where the lender has initiated a foreclosure process, then used the "entry provisions" in a *Deed of Trust* to lock-out the owner and force the owner to move out of the property (in order to facilitate the sale of the premise to some third person or entity). Later, the lender cancels the foreclosure process while leaving the borrower on-title. The Supreme Court held that it is a violation of RCW 7.28.230(1) because the lender who locks-out the borrower effectively takes possession prior to the foreclosure process being completed.

The lender is not required to notify the property owner that the foreclosure has been cancelled, so the property owner is often unaware of the obligations associated with continued ownership, such as payment of local taxes, and upkeep of the property. Although no local government entity was a party to *Nationstar*, the case significantly impacts the ability of local government to take action with respect to vacant or "zombie" properties, especially in connection with securing the property and mitigating undesirable impacts on neighboring property owners.

Zombie properties are a problem because they are not maintained, are attractive to squatters, and can become a source of illegal activity. Until *Nationstar*, local governments had the option of requiring lenders to secure and maintain abandoned properties. In light of *Nationstar*, what options remain for addressing zombie properties? According to the Municipal Research Services Center there are several options available to local governments:

- Redefine what remedies the jurisdiction will seek from lenders. *Nationstar* is about lender actions that amount to taking possession of

the property, such as changing the locks. Requesting lenders to take less drastic action, such as mowing the grass and maintaining the exterior of the property, alleviates the visual impacts of a zombie property and would not seem to violate *Nationstar*.

- Determine if the property owner will consent to lender entry to secure the property. In *Nationstar*, the Court noted that a lender may take possession prior to foreclosure if the property owner agrees. If the property is abandoned and the owners can be located, they may agree to entry so that the property can be protected from trespassers and the elements. Providing consent may also be in the best interest of the property owners because it preserves the value of the collateral and maximizes any surplus funds which may be available to the owners after foreclosure.
- In cases where squatters have moved in and are creating problems for neighbors, local governments can consider criminal or administrative enforcement options against them. Again, the owners can be of assistance if they are willing to file a trespass report and indicate that any current occupants are unauthorized. In addition, squatters can be prosecuted under chapter 9A.61 RCW if they divert or make unauthorized connections to obtain utility service. If the structure becomes dangerous or does not have water service, it may be possible to post a "do not occupy" notice on the property so that subsequent entry becomes a criminal violation of the building code.
- For the absolute worst cases, jurisdictions can (1) seek appointment of a custodial receiver under chapter 7.60 RCW to secure and manage zombie houses; or (2) have them declared a nuisance and abated under chapter 7.48 RCW. Both of these options can be costly and time consuming and require a superior court order.

In other legal news

Lawsuit Filed in Seattle's First Come, First Served Rental Ordinance

In January 2016, the Seattle City Council passed an ordinance billed as "comprehensive tenant protection legislation." It prevents housing providers from giving applicants with alternative sources of income a lower priority in screening. It requires landlords to review applications one at a time, on a first-come, first-served basis. The city council halted enforcement of the new regulation to July of 2017.

Before passage of this new regulation, it was illegal to discriminate against a prospective renter whose primary source of income is a Section 8 voucher. The legislation expanded that legal protection to include people who receive alternative sources of income such as a pension, Social Security, unemployment, child support or any other governmental or non-profit subsidy.

Ethan Blevins, an attorney with the Pacific Legal Foundation, is suing the city on behalf of several landlords to halt the implementation of the "first in time" law. According to Blevins, the ordinance stripped his clients of all discretion in how they can choose who lives in their properties. "This would be the rough equivalent of an employer being forced to hire whoever meets their job qualifications first," Blevins said. Adding, "It impairs people's rights beyond what's necessary to fulfill their goal."

Protecting Your Business

Elections in 2017

Laws govern the way in which you conduct your business and affect your bottom line. Laws are made by elected officials.

REALTORS® don't just sell homes. We sell neighborhoods and Quality of Life.

REALTORS® know that Quality of Life begins with a good job in a company that has a great future. Homes are where those jobs go at night. That's why it's so important to have elected officials who understand the key contribution that jobs and housing make to healthy, vibrant communities.

We need elected officials who share our REALTOR® values, and who appreciate the hard work you do as a real estate professional. So, members of the Association review voting records of elected officials. And it's why your REALTOR® colleagues interview candidates running for office.

This year Seattle King County REALTORS® will take action to protect and enhance your business by supporting candidates for local office (city councils, county council) who share our REALTOR® values.

Auburn: Nancy Backus to Seek Re-Election as Mayor

Nancy Backus, the first woman elected to serve as Auburn's Mayor since the city was incorporated in 1891, has announced she will seek a second term as Mayor.

Backus has been a strong advocate for issues important to Auburn on the local, regional, state and national levels, including fiscal responsibility, economic development, public safety, affordable housing and human services.

She received strong support from the Association of REALTORS® when she ran for Mayor in 2013, and the city has been a poster-child example for how medium-sized cities can adopt policies that help to ensure working families have a place to live in strong healthy neighborhoods.

As Mayor, Backus focused on creating opportunities for small businesses to grow and thrive in Auburn. During her tenure, the new commercial construction valuation almost doubled from $66 million in 2015 to $120 million in 2016, she said, and multi-million dollar expansions of The Boeing Company and MultiCare Auburn Medical Center have broken ground. In addition, a number of other businesses have either opened (or are about to open) including: Panera Bread, Big 5, Green River Cyclery & Busted Bike Cafe, The Quarters, Gor Gai Thai, expansion of Gosanko Chocolates, and Geaux Brewing.

Backus has also played a *regional* leadership role on transportation, housing and public safety issues because she believes creating strong regional relationships returns significant benefits to Auburn. Auburn Councilmember Largo Wales - who as serves as Deputy Mayor - has announced that she will also seek the position of Mayor in this fall's election.

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Federal Way – Susan Honda to Run Against Jim Ferrell for Mayor

Federal Way City Councilmember Susan Honda announced February 16th that she plans to run for Mayor against incumbent Jim Ferrell in this fall's election. Honda is currently serving in her second term on the City Council. Mayor Jim Ferrell, who is running for re-election, has proposed hiring more police officers. While Honda supports doing so, she wants to be certain the city has enough money to not only fill those positions, but sustain them, as well.

In announcing her decision to run for Mayor, Honda said that public safety, homelessness and economic development would be three of her top priorities if elected Mayor. In addition, even though the city of Federal Way has a "Strong Mayor" (as opposed to a "Council-City Manager") form of government, Honda said she thinks the City should hire a City Administrator to assist the Mayor in running the City.

Kent – Dennis Higgins Announces He Will Not Run for Re-Election

Dennis Higgins, a current member and former President of the Kent City Council, has announced he will not seek re-election to the City Council this fall. Higgins was first elected to position #4 in 2009 when he defeated Dana Ralph, and he ran unopposed in 2013 for a second 4-year term. In announcing his decision not to run, Higgins explained that he wants to spend more time with his family.

As Council President, Higgins pushed through a new city B&O tax that was supposed to be emergency funding to clean up a backlog of transportation projects. However, the Mayor's office has repeatedly worked to increase the city's new B&O tax, and to divert it to other non-transportation purposes.

Higgins also worked unsuccessfully to have businesses pay for grade separation crossings over the railroad tracks in order to benefit residents who were inconvenienced by the trains, but that effort fell apart when the gap between who would pay and who would benefit was widely publicized.

REALTORS® Political Action Committee (RPAC)

NEW! An Easy, Quick Way to Protect Your Business - REALTOR® PAC ONLINE

Introducing a new secure, online REALTOR® PAC (RPAC) investment site making it easier than ever for busy REALTORS® to protect their business.

We can't all go to Washington DC, the state Capital or even our City Halls while government leaders are making decisions that affect our industry; but while we are busy, REALTOR® PAC can fight for us and for our clients. Please make an investment of $50, $100 or $500 to ensure that when government acts there is no harm to real estate, no new taxes and no added, unnecessary complications to the real estate transaction. Visit: http://www.realtoractioncenter.com/rpac/?referrer=http://www.nwrealtor.com

As of March this year SKCR has raised $157,790 for the REALTOR® PAC. Please invest in REALTOR® PAC at www.warealtor.org/government/political-affairs/

Issues & Impacts is a quarterly publication produced by SKCR to inform members about current issues and successes within your Governmental Affairs Department. Our next publication will be released in July 2017. The 2017 VP of Governmental & Public Affairs is Michael Orbino michaelorbino@johnlscott.com, VP-elect of Governmental & Public Affairs is Georgia Wall georgiawall@johnlscott.com, staff director is David Crowell dcrowell@nwrealtor.com, and our local legislative housing advocates are Sam Pace sam@sampace.com and Randy Bannecker randy@bannecker.com. Please call David Crowell at (425) 974-1011 ext. 704 if there are any local legislative issues that need SKCR's attention.