



CITY OF EVERETT

2021 budget address

Sept. 16, 2020

Council President Tuohy, City Council members, City staff and residents of Everett:

I am pleased to present you with a proposed budget for 2021 that is balanced, fiscally responsible and supports the important services the City provides to our residents and businesses.

We've been spending a lot of time these past few months discussing cuts we had to make due to the pandemic and the options we have for balancing our budget for next year. Susy and Lori will share the details of our budget proposal later this evening.

My remarks will share some of the ways 2020 has inspired innovation in our City teams, and highlights from our 2021 budget.

First I'd like to acknowledge that this has undeniably been the most difficult year our city has faced in our lifetime and an especially difficult budget year.

I'd like to express my deepest gratitude to every member of our City teams.

In the face of adversity, our teams have truly risen to the occasion and have exemplified everything that makes me proud to lead this City.

Working together, and working creatively, you have shown ingenuity, strength and resilience, and all that we can accomplish working together, as one Everett.

Thank you.

I'll now provide an overview of our budget proposal, which is built on a foundation of quality-of-life priorities.

Responsive & responsible government

To help stabilize our financial footing, next year we'll be carrying forward some of the reductions in workforce and position eliminations that we made this year, which have been hard, but have forced us to innovate and adapt.

Being a responsive government means being attuned to what's going on in our world and community, and adjusting as appropriate. As we have seen from recent events, 2020 has brought to light the need to focus more on equity and addressing systemic racism.

My proposed budget builds on our work on equity and inclusion. This year we created a new position for an equity manager, which I'm pleased has been filled by Kay Barnes who has been part of our City team since 2006.

We did not add to our City's budget by creating this position; rather we reallocated resources toward this important work to result in no net increase.

In her new role, Kay will focus on broadening our reach and more effectively engaging with our Black, Indigenous, People of Color communities, and other marginalized groups. She will also be working on plans to improve inclusion, equity and diversity at the City and create a culture of anti-racism. This includes a staff training program, and training for our police officers on implicit bias and the history of race in policing. And, she'll be part of efforts to identify and address inequities and bias in City systems, policies and procedures.

Our city teams have also been incredibly responsive in adapting to changes required in response to COVID.

Our safety team, working together with our facilities department, had to jump into action and immerse themselves in learning about the latest in workplace safety as it relates to COVID, which remains an ever-evolving body of work. They play a vital role in developing policies and protocols to ensure we offer a safe workplace, and are protecting the health of our City teams, as well as our customers and residents. This work will certainly continue as we adapt to the current health crisis and ensure safety into the future.

Once the state's Stay Home, Stay Healthy orders went into effect, our IT team had to scale up our technical infrastructure to quickly support hundreds of new telecommuters and ensure continuity of technical support operations. They helped some of our teams transform in-person services to virtual operations and will continue to keep us connected and performing necessary services virtually as needed in 2021.

We also had to adapt and find a way to make our meetings, city council meetings and hearings digital so that our community can still engage and meet safely.

Our legal department and municipal court have done great work as well, maintaining continuity of operations during this pandemic. Next year, we will build on these successes and move toward a Paperlite court. Our court will also expand our electronic home monitoring program to prevent lengthy jail detention while defendants await trial.

Through this coming year, we will continue to move forward with the merger of our parks and facilities departments, which began earlier this year. This merger has proven to be very successful, creating operational and staffing efficiencies.

Safe Community

Being in the throes of a global public health crisis has underscored the importance of investments in public safety, especially in emergency preparedness.

Our fire chief and Office of Emergency Management have been front and center since the first report of COVID-19 in our community. Their expertise has guided our decisions both locally and regionally and has helped save countless lives in this crisis.

They have been assisting with the coordinated regional response, securing and administering federal relief funds, and leading efforts to collect and distribute face cover donations, especially at the time when face covers were in short supply, distributing more than 110,000 throughout our city.

As part of a federal grant, this past year we were able to hire 10 new team members and they are now working in the field. This grant allowed us to add an aid car to Station 6 in order to better and more quickly provide emergency services to our residents in south Everett. To keep our fire budget as lean as possible, however, in 2021 we will be permanently eliminating a chief of services position.

Also under my administration, we have been able to fully access resources that we didn't in the past. The re-evaluation of our federal Ground Emergency Medical Transport reimbursement dollars has resulted in an additional \$2 million in federal resources, both this year and into 2021.

Next year we will continue exploring the possibility of forming or joining a regional fire authority with our neighbors. While early in the process, this may provide an opportunity to ensure critical fire and EMS protection to our residents in the most efficient means possible. We'll continue to evaluate this option in the coming year.

Moving on to Everett Police: Everett has one of the most progressive, innovative police departments in the country.

Our proposed budget includes funding for police officer training. Investing in training is investing in the quality and caliber of our police force, and I'm proud of the fact that every one of our officers receives 40 hours of crisis intervention/de-escalation training, well above the state-mandated eight-hour requirement.

This future training includes participation in Project ABLE, which stands for "active bystandership for law enforcement." This program prepares officers to successfully intervene as necessary to prevent misconduct, avoid police mistakes and promote officer health and wellness. Providing this level of training helps create a culture in law enforcement that supports and ensures peer intervention. Our police department will be certifying trainers and plans to roll out training to all their staff beginning in 2021.

Everett Police is also kicking off our involvement with the Snohomish County Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) project, in conjunction with the Snohomish County Prosecutor's Office.

This program is designed to keep people who commit low-level crimes, and who may be better served by treatment, out of jail by connecting them with case managers instead. Diversion strategies such as this have been shown to lead to better outcomes, so we're pleased to be part of this work.

In 2021, we also propose to hire three new officers, thanks to a recent COPS grant we were awarded, and which you, our council, approved a few weeks ago. This grant will help pay for the addition of two bicycle officers and one motorcycle/traffic officer. This will allow us to expand our bicycle patrol and deploy these officers in other parts of the city, rather than just downtown. Bicycle officers are a special team. They know our local businesses, they know our residents, and they can connect with the public in personal ways, which is why community policing so important. Additionally, speeding and reckless driving, especially in our neighborhoods, are a concern we hear from our residents. So far this year, we've had nearly 1,500 collisions in our city. Most crashes can be prevented, so adding capacity to our traffic safety unit will help us address these community concerns.

Next year we plan to continue and expand our body-worn camera program as well. We heard loud and clear that this is something our community wants for transparency. And, having piloted the use of these cameras earlier this year, we've been pleased with the results. We are seeking federal grant funding to allow us to expand the cameras department-wide.

We are also budgeting for an assessment of our police department, which I know you as a council support. This will include an analysis of police staffing, patrol scheduling and deployment, community policing, and technology needs.

We're making some organizational changes within the police department as well. We've reduced management in the department, protecting public safety, while reducing costs, and we'll be moving the embedded social workers to our community development team. This will allow us to cultivate more deeper partnerships with our human services programs and partners. Our social workers will still work day-in and day-out with our police officers, while being highly connected to our community partners. This budget also includes funding for an additional social worker to help meet the growing needs and provide more coverage evenings and weekends, providing more support for our police teams and people experiencing trauma.

Housing & affordability

Housing and affordability are key to a thriving, healthy community. Over the past 10 years, we've faced a shortage of housing at all price points, and particularly for lower-income residents. This is contributing to a crisis that is most visible in the increase of the homeless population around our city and county. The economic impact of COVID is making the situation even worse.

I will continue efforts to build capacity in Everett by working in partnership with Snohomish County. Now and into 2021 we will be focused on affordable housing, as well as shelter capacity, to ensure that the needs of our residents, businesses and those in need in our community, are addressed.

In 2021, our Rethink Zoning process moves to implementation phase, and our Rethink Housing efforts will inspire our community's response to the housing challenges we are facing. Our hope is to simplify our zoning codes so they make more sense, as well engage our community to understand our housing needs now and into the future.

Although we know we need more housing, I am glad to report that we are experiencing growth and the past year was a strong year in construction permitting. All in all, we have well over 1,000 units in the permitting and construction pipeline.

To help us keep pace with this growth, our 2021 budget includes expansion in permitting and planning to ensure staff resources can support continued development in Everett.

Transportation & infrastructure

Transportation and infrastructure form the basic foundation of everything a city needs to provide to its residents, businesses and visitors. This includes roads, walkways, traffic management, water and sewer, and public transportation.

Starting with public transit: our team at Everett Transit has done an amazing job of adjusting their operations during the time of COVID to keep our drivers, riders and workers safe.

With more people working and attending school from home, however, ridership has taken a hit and is down 50 percent. So a big focus for Everett Transit next year will be planning for service changes in this COVID world. We'll be doing some planning and public outreach to determine what changes we can make to maximize efficiency while still providing service when and where our riders need it most.

We're also working to ensure Everett Transit meets the need of our community now and well into the future. Through our Rethink Transit initiative, we're currently engaging the community as we explore possible options for long-range sustainability.

Our public works team is the backbone of ensuring our infrastructure is in place in our city.

Last month we celebrated the opening of the Grand Avenue Park Bridge, a major utility project that improves our stormwater system, while also creating a gorgeous pedestrian connection to our waterfront.

I can't tell you how many families I've heard rave about this new asset. It was great to see the picture on the front page of the Herald of adorable local kids racing to be the first to run across.

Another major project that made our hearts happy is the completion of Rucker Renewal.

Both took decades of planning and years of construction. They were hard on our community, but we are now reaping the benefits of these projects, which have improved our infrastructure while also making Everett even more beautiful and welcoming.

Major projects planned for next year include continuing the seismic retrofit of the Maple Heights bridge, as well as the design phase for the complete replacement of the Edgewater bridge, which has been deemed "structurally deficient and seismically at risk."

Also in the works for next year is the implementation of a new asset management plan for water and sewer infrastructure. Taking care of our assets is incredibly important. For years, we have unfortunately underinvested in preventative maintenance of our vertical infrastructure and other assets and the impacts of that are definitely catching up with us. In 2021 we've budgeted for improvements in order to maintain these vital assets.

Economic & cultural vitality

A key theme this year has been innovation and finding new ways to do business and serve our community during this global health crisis. Some examples include taking our permit counter online, administering federal relief grants to support local businesses and public service organizations, and developing a variety of tools and online resources to help our community navigate these changing and challenging times.

We'll continue to build on these efforts in 2021, always looking for creative ways we can support our city's return to vibrancy.

Aerospace has been hit hard by the pandemic and economic shutdown. A priority area for me and our team will be fighting for aerospace jobs, which are vital to our economy. We'll be doing this in partnership with Snohomish County, Greater Seattle Partners and the region as a whole to ensure major employers in aerospace recover and we retain a strong work force in our city.

While we fight for aerospace, we'll also continue to assist and attract new businesses to invest here and make Everett their home.

This will include an emphasis on jobs that support a green economy. The catastrophic wildfires scorching the west coast, and the horrific pollution they've been causing, are sadly becoming part of our new normal due to climate change. We will move ahead on the goals of our climate action plan, and especially on positioning Everett as a green economy hub for the future.

A new "green" business I'm excited to welcome to Everett is inFarm. This German-based company is expanding its Washington presence with a new state-of-the-art facility in the Delta neighborhood. Their philosophy is that your food shouldn't travel more than you, so they will provide healthy hydroponically-grown herbs and salad greens, grown here in Everett, to local grocers.

We're also building on our reputation as a leading manufacturing and distribution center. Amazon is constructing a new distribution center in the Port of Everett's Riverside Development, as well as a first-of-its-kind robotic distribution center in southwest Everett. These projects are expected to bring Amazon's total employment to over 800 in our city.

I'll touch now on cultural arts, which have taken a hit this year. State rules to limit the spread of COVID required the cancellation of many activities, such as theater, festivals, live music, parades and events. We have, however, found other ways to support the arts in Everett and have plans for a strong return in 2021 when it is safe to do so.

We will continue our work to get Everett designated as a Creative District through the State of Washington. This designation shows the world what a creative and thriving arts community we have and also comes with grant funding, signage and other tools we can use to grow the creative economy and support local artists.

Due to the uncertainties created by the pandemic, we're building some flexibility into our work plans, and focusing our efforts on public art and empowering artists. You may have seen new murals popping up - we expect more to come. We're also moving forward with public art installations on Broadway and Hoyt.

We may not know when we'll be able to host large events again in our city, but we are looking ahead to that day and have been working with the governor's office to create guidelines for safely hosting events. We're also in the planning stages for Sorticulture and the Wendt and Mayor's Arts Awards, and exploring alternative ways to provide those experiences if we cannot convene them in person.

This budget also proposes new funding that will allow our cultural arts commission to partner with the city on either a cultural event or art project to commemorate this challenging year and help our community heal.

In addition to having a vibrant arts scene, having beautiful parks and amenities also makes a city a wonderful place to live. Our parks have been a much-needed haven during this pandemic and are one of the few city amenities that's remained open throughout this time. Some of our high-touch areas like playgrounds and picnic areas are still closed, but our trails, sports courts, and boat launches are open. And our golf courses have been thriving, reporting record-breaking number of rounds and revenue.

Our 2021 budget will focus on continued protection of our green spaces. To ensure our 774 acres of park property and our 45 parks are well cared for and in excellent shape, I am proposing the addition of one maintenance project coordinator position and to repurpose a portion of our parks seasonal dollars to fund six more entry-level maintenance positions.

Next year also includes funding to complete the Emma Yule park, adjacent to the new YMCA on Colby, as well as upgrade our playgrounds at Thornton A. Sullivan and Howarth Parks.

I'm also very excited for our plans to start work on the Silver Lake trail, which I'd hoped to do this year, but work was paused by the pandemic. This project will move forward in 2021 and create a connected recreational route all around the lake.

Next year, our recreational programming will look different. With COVID preventing gatherings and events, and the limited resources we have, we are not budgeting for traditional city-sponsored recreational classes or outings.

We have had a great response, though, to our first public-private partnership request for proposals. This RFP seeks innovative and creative ideas for partnering with other organizations to enhance recreation opportunities throughout the city. Many organizations are asking questions and touring facilities. We will evaluate potential partnerships based on how well they improve our assets and access to recreation, and the extent to which they increase revenues or decrease expenses for the City. **This has the potential to benefit our residents, our local business and nonprofit community, and the City's bottom line.** Once we know which proposals are viable, we can begin discussions around vital programs such as senior center services and Camp Patterson.

A key part of our parks department is our animal shelter and like other examples I've shared today, the Shelter has truly found innovation amidst the pandemic. They have been leading the industry in best practices for shelters by expanding their foster program nearly overnight and providing curbside and online adoption services. Our new fundraising manager, who we brought on last year, has already surpassed her 2020 goal by implementing donor tracking software, developing newsletters and writing grants that support animals in Everett.

Just yesterday they held their first live puppy-cam fundraiser, which not only stole hearts with the adorable puppies, but also raised essential funds to support food, supplies and medical care for shelter animals.

Engaged & informed community

When COVID-19 arrived in our community, it turned our world upside down. In this new world, it's been critical to expand and innovate the ways we keep our community informed about what's going on. City teams have boosted our web content, launched a dedicated COVID newsletter, and found ways to conduct meetings and hearings and council meetings virtually.

We still don't know when the world will find its new normal, so this focused work in a virtual world will remain a 2021 priority.

Our neighborhood groups for example, as well as our boards and commissions, have had to go online. Our community development team will continue to support these groups and their adaptation to changing circumstances.

Our 2021 budget also includes funding for matching grants for our neighborhoods. These grants not only create opportunities for community connections and neighborhood improvements, but also bring a strong return on investment for the City, with the amount of volunteer hours and in-kind donations that are generated by our neighborhoods.

Our libraries have truly embraced virtual services, and I've been very impressed by how our library teams adapted their service model to continue providing our community with resources, even while being closed.

They have had great success promoting and expanding their e-resources, providing curbside service and hosting virtual programs to meet our community's needs for entertainment and lifelong learning. They also kicked off a video story-telling series, with City staff reading their favorite children's books.

This year we'll launch *One Everett One Book*, an annual community-wide reading program in partnership with WSU-Everett, Everett Community College and Everett Public Schools. This will continue into next year.

For 2021, our budget includes continued support for the expansion of our virtual programming, continued curbside service (until it's safe to open our doors), and funds for books and materials.

I have been hearing loud and clear that people love our libraries! The past few weeks, I received more calls and emails from community members advocating in support of the library than any other service, so it's clear how much this resource is valued by our community. Parents and teachers especially have a passion for children's programming. I recently met with participants of the Parent Leadership Training Institute, where I heard from our Hispanic parents the importance of our library services to their community.

Our proposed budget includes funding to fill a second youth librarian position. This position will focus on connecting with diverse families and supporting services that meet the needs of our growing and diverse population, including bilingual and bicultural programs and services.

In closing I'd like to again say that this has been an extraordinarily difficult year for our businesses, our staff and our residents.

But in spite of the challenges we've faced and continue to face, I'm proud of and grateful for the resiliency and adaptability I've seen all around us.

Our City teams have demonstrated tremendous innovation, creativity, and commitment to our community, finding new ways to continue delivering our core services and conducting the business of being a City.

I'd like to once again thank each one of our City team members.

And I'd like to acknowledge the tremendous work of our finance team who have literally been working around the clock to pull this budget together. Thank you to Lori Cummings, Susy Haugen, Rae Ann Nielsen, Wai Poon, and everyone who contributed to this effort.

I'd also like to thank our boards and commissions, who have been incredibly resilient during this time. They have remained engaged and continued to provide valuable advice to me and our staff during an incredibly challenging year.

And, finally, I'd like to thank you, our city councilmembers.

We had to build this budget differently this year by a committee of the whole and, as a result, all of you have been engaged throughout the process. Thank you for your questions, your ideas and your partnership.

I want to give a special thank you to our budget and finance sub-committee chair, Scott Murphy, and Council President Judy Tuohy for their dedication and flexibility as we have navigated these strange, uncertain times.

I appreciate each of your perspectives and commitment to moving Everett forward. And I look forward to our continued collaboration in addressing our financial challenges and creating a sustainable future for our residents.

Thank you.