

KXXO COMMUNITY ISSUES & PUBLIC AFFAIRS QUARTERLY REPORT

First Quarter 2024

SCHOOLS

--Faced with declining enrollments like many districts, the Olympia School District proposed cutting a 3 ½ million dollar budget cap by closing two elementary schools. Parents were outraged, and led a successful effort in court to delay for at least a year any school closures. Parents and people opposed to closing schools said cuts could be made in other areas, including cuts to administration staff.

--While contemplating elementary school closures, the district abandoned plans to build a new high school.

CRIME

--The number of juveniles committing crimes increased since the new year began. Kids as young as 12 and 13 involved in car thefts, armed hold-ups, and so called “crash and grabs”, where a vehicle is used to smash into a business to steal merchandise.

--The State legislature approved changes to Washington States pursuit laws, which for 2 years limited when police could pursue criminal suspects. Police were prohibited from pursuing vehicles even if the vehicle was reported to be stolen. This triggered a huge increase in car thefts. Washington citizens overwhelmingly signed an initiative to lawmakers making changes to the pursuit laws.

DRUGS

--Fentanyl overdoses continue to claim lives. Several high-profile busts by law enforcement agencies in the area have been made. Thousands of pounds of fentanyl pills and powder have been seized but the supply continues to flow.

HOUSING

--Lawmakers failed to pass legislation designed to stem the tide of huge rent increases across the state, but local leaders hearing from the public to impose some form of rent

control. The Olympia City Council approved several measures to help renters including limits on move in fees, pet deposits, and other fees. Rents in the Capitol city up an average of 40% over the past 3 years.

--Several new facilities opened in the South Sound to house the homeless. Several former motels were purchased as transitional housing. Many encampments used by the homeless along area freeways were dismantled because of safety concerns, and large boulders put in place to prevent further occupation of the areas.

TRAFFIC

--In 2023, traffic fatalities hit their highest level in nearly 30 years in Washington State, and the trend continues in 2024. Several multi-fatality crashes have occurred. Police blame impaired and distracted driving for the crashes along with high speeds.

KXXO Community Issues long form Coverage: Q1 2024

Saturday January 6 at 7am on “Your Community” duration 12 minutes

Kyle Cronk, President of the South Sound YMCA discusses the wide range of services provided by the Y. [COMMUNITY RESOURCES]

Saturday January 20 at 7am on “Your Community” duration 12 minutes

Lacey City Council member Lenny Greenstein talks about the fastest growing city in Thurston County and how the Council is preparing for the growth. [GROWTH/DEVELOPMENT]

Saturday February 3 at 7am on “Your Community” duration 12 minutes

For Black History Month author Selma Jackson discusses her book, “Blacks In Thurston County.” [RACE]

Saturday February 24 at 7am on “Your Community” duration 12 minutes

Kellie McNelly, Executive Director of Rochester Organization Of Families, discusses ROOF and their wide range of community services available to those in the Rochester,

WA area. [COMMUNITY RESOURCES]

Saturday March 2 at 7am on “Your Community” duration 12 minutes

Members of TOGETHER Talk about their goal of supporting youth, making sure they are healthy, safe, and valued. [YOUTH]

Saturday March 9 at 7am on “Your Community” duration 12 minutes

Members of the city of Olympia’s Crisis Response Team discuss how they make a difference downtown for those in need of crisis counseling, conflict resolution, first aid, and support service referrals. [HOMELESS/MENTAL HEALTH]

Saturday March 23 at 7am on “Your Community” duration 12 minutes

Thurston County Sheriff Derek Sanders talks about the challenges his department faces. [POLICING]

Saturday March 30 at 7am on “Your Community” duration 12 minutes

Olympia Art Program Manager Stephanie Johnson discusses the numerous public art projects in the city. [ARTS]

Community Issues quarterly report prepared by:

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