

Headlines

News from University Place City Hall



January 5, 2022

Steve Worthington Elected U.P. Mayor for 2022 and 2023

During its first meeting of 2022, the U.P. City Council voted to elect Steve Worthington to serve as the City's mayor for the next two years. Pierce County Superior Court Judge Grant Blinn administered the oath of office for Council Members Javier Figueroa, Steve Worthington, Edward Wood and Denise McCluskey, who were elected by voters in November to four-year terms. Javier Figueroa was elected to serve as Mayor Pro Tem and Ed Wood was chosen to lead the Finance Committee.

After taking the gavel, Mayor Worthington took a few minutes to thank his predecessor, Caroline Belleci, for her leadership amid all the challenges of the pandemic. "It has been 22 months since this Council has sat at a table together in a meeting, but through that period of time, Mayor Belleci has been holding us together and getting the work done of the City," he said. "We all appreciate your work and offer a heartfelt thank you for being our mayor."

U.P.'s new mayor then thanked his fellow Council members and reminded them that by working together, "We can just about move mountains."

Worthington served as Mayor Pro Tem under Caroline Belleci from January 2020 to December 2021. He has represented U.P. City Council Position 3 since 2014. In addition, he has also served as U.P.'s representative to Pierce County Cities and Towns, Pierce County Mayors and Executives, Pierce County Regional Council, the Association of Washington Cities Legislative Committee and the Rainier Communications Commission. He also led U.P.'s Community Vision subcommittee.

Mayor Worthington brings more than 25 years of leadership experience to his new role, having formerly served as City Manager for Fife, Washington. He currently consults for local government in the Northwest. He holds a master's degree in Public Administration from Eastern Washington University and a bachelor's degree in Speech Communication from the University of Washington. He and his wife of 45 years, Jill, have two sons, John and Benjamin. Both graduated from Curtis High School.



What's UP with Biz

Many U.P. diners have missed the home-cooked fare and family-friendly environs of the Pine Cone Café at 7912 27th St. W. ever since it closed in 2020.

But local restauranteurs and U.P. residents Dana Claar Verellen and her husband Dave Verellen are busy making plans to reopen the eatery sometime later this year. The couple also own and operate the **Zodiac Supper Club** and **Dusty's Hideaway** in Tacoma. They will rent the Pine Cone property from its owner and previous operator.



Initial plans call for the menu to offer many of the same breakfast, lunch and dinner favorites fans of the Pine Cone came to love. There will also be brunch offerings and cocktails.

Loyal fans can follow the reopening timeline and progress [here](#).

First Phase of Homestead Park Enhancements Ready to Begin

Last spring, the City of University Place Parks Advisory Commission sought public input on plans for the redevelopment of Homestead Park.

Located at 3761 Bridgeport Way W., Homestead Park encompasses 5.5 acres and includes wooded areas, walking trails, a fern grotto and a rhododendron collection.

It is one of the City's most popular and well-used parks.



Based on information gathered from a public survey, as well as a public meeting on April 28, 2021, the City will be undertaking a number of enhancements to the park, including gateway sculptures that are intended to help clearly delineate its two entrances for those who visit.

A request for proposals (RFP) and additional background information will be available on Jan. 6, 2022 on the City's website. In addition to the gateway sculptures, the proposal also calls for three community gathering art pieces that will be located at seating areas throughout the park. The designs should be inspired by cultural and environmental influences in the park, U.P. and the Puget Sound region. The deadline for submissions is Jan. 21, 2022.

Prior to turning over the mayor's gavel to new Mayor Steve Worthington, outgoing Mayor Caroline Belleci took a few minutes during the first City Council meeting of 2022 to review some of the accomplishments of the City during 2021. These included:



Improved Communications

The City launched hybrid Council meetings that enable residents to safely attend City Council meetings in person or in the comfort of their homes. A partnership with Pierce County TV provides streaming of these meetings on YouTube and via the City's cable TV network (UPTV).

New technologies have created more efficient permitting and licensing processes for residents, businesses, and our staff. A new website offers an ADA-accessible platform that includes a City meeting agenda center with packets, agendas/minutes and links to video all in one place. The University Place Police Department debuted a virtual studio so it can continue to hold its popular public safety forums and community academies online.

City Partnerships

In an effort to support U.P. residents most impacted by the pandemic, City staff collaborated with rental community partners, churches, school groups and non-profit human service providers to develop a City-administered COVID relief program that offered financial assistance to our residents for food, rent and childcare. In addition, a partnership with the Pierce County Department of Emergency Management led to two COVID testing events and five mobile vaccine events.

City Events

Despite the ongoing pandemic, creative problem-solving enabled the City to hold many of its traditional community events, including the Curtis High School Mobile Graduation Parade, Jazz in the Village concerts, Movie Night in the Park, Music on the Square and the Holiday Cheer UP Reverse Parade.

City Finances

In its 2021 review of the City's bonds, Moody's Rating Agency noted the strength of the City's finances, and in particular, its reserves. They stated that the City's cash balance as a percent of operating revenues is far stronger than the U.S. median and far superior to other Moody's-rated cities nationwide. The agency also noted City's manageable debt burden and a small pension liability.

New Businesses

Since 2019, total business licenses in the City have increased by 35 percent, including a 23 percent increase in brick-and-mortar businesses and a 48 percent increase in home-based businesses.

Watch Belleci deliver her entire State of the City report beginning 35 minutes into the **Jan. 3 Council Meeting**.

Chief's Corner

I hope everyone had a safe and enjoyable holiday season. I wanted to take a moment to share my gratitude for the support so many of you showed your Police Department throughout 2021 and share some insight into what's to come in 2022.

The officers here in U.P. continued to receive thank you notes and gift bags right up through the holidays. On behalf of the entire department, I want to say thank you to all of those children, adults and businesses that participated in these acts of appreciation and support. I can assure you that they truly do make a difference to our officers. We know we are fortunate to serve in such a great community and these acts were just another example of what makes University Place special.



Although 2021 continued to present some challenges, in U.P. our crime stats actually improved after a three-year upward trend. This is significant since our staffing has remained constant, while many jurisdictions in western Washington experienced increased crime rates with declining staffing numbers. Watch for a future Chief's Corner with a full review of public safety stats and highlights from 2021.

As we look ahead, we are gearing up for additional public safety education programs in 2022. We believe these events provide U.P. citizens with opportunities to stay well-informed on what current public safety challenges we face. They also allow us to gather your input on strategies and desired staffing levels as the city grows. Watch this space for more information in the weeks to come.

Until then, however, as always, please let me know if you have any questions about public safety in U.P.

Stay safe. And Happy 2022.

Curran Apple Orchard 2022 Tree Adoptions Now Available

Start off the New Year right by adopting an apple tree at the Curran Apple Orchard Park located at 3920 Grandview Drive W. in University Place!

Adoption applications for the 2022 harvest season are now being accepted. There are two adoption categories: **Pruning Adoptions (\$45 available through March 31) and Orchard Supporter Adoptions (\$70 available through July 31)**. Application forms are available at



www.curranappleorchard.com. Several varieties are available including Golden Delicious, Gravenstein and MacIntosh apples.

"Tree adoptions are a great opportunity for individuals, families, friends and groups to work together and learn about apple trees, not to mention helping a local park and enjoying delicious apples in the fall," said CORE chair Debbie Klosowski.

Pruning Adopters are required to prune, thin, harvest and clean up windfalls from their trees. Free pruning instruction is available on our website, at pruning events*, or by contacting apples@curranappleorchard.com. Adopters may also borrow pruning tools from the barn if needed.

Orchard Supporter Adopters are a perfect choice for people who would like a tree but cannot participate in tree care. Trained volunteers will prune and thin your tree; however, you are still responsible for windfall pick up and harvest.

All tree adopters will have their names inscribed on wooden tags to identify their trees. For more information, please visit www.curranappleorchard.com or email apples@curranappleorchard.com.

***Pruning Events**

CORE volunteers are scheduled to prune on the following Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

- Jan. 29
- Feb. 12 and 26
- March 5 and 19

All volunteers are welcome to help with pruning, hauling branches and other tasks. Pruning guidance is also available at this time!

CORE (Curran Orchard Resource Enthusiasts) is a volunteer group dedicated to maintaining the Curran Apple Orchard Park. Everyone is invited to our meetings and new members are ALWAYS welcome!

CORE meetings are held the 1st Tuesday at 6 p.m. via zoom. Contact apples@curranappleorchard.com for more info!

Serve Your City as a Volunteer

The seven-member Public Safety Advisory Commission, which advises the City Council on issues related to public safety, is seeking another citizen volunteer. This is a perfect opportunity for those who wish to contribute to meaningful discussions related to policing, fire and rescue, and other issues related to public safety in University Place.

This role is ideal for those whose who want to volunteer but who cannot commit to an extensive time commitment. The Public Safety Advisory Commission does not have standing monthly meetings. It meets to work on matters specifically assigned by the City Council, either as part of an annual work plan or by separate resolution.

To learn more and download the application, visit the **City's Commissions and**

Do Your Part and Get the Shot

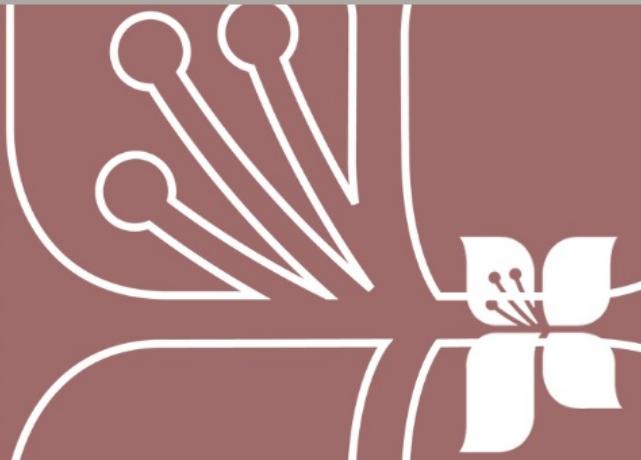




You may be the person we
are looking for!

View current job
opportunities at
www.CityofUP.com

WE WANT YOU ON OUR TEAM!



Flashvote

Have you signed up for FlashVote? It's not too late!

Surveys take less than a minute and give participants an opportunity to weigh in on issues within our local community.



Sign up now to take part in upcoming surveys!

UNIVERSITY PLACE HYBRID CITY COUNCIL MEETING



Tuesday, Jan 18, 2022
at 6:30 p.m.

WWW.CITYOFUP.COM



**Mayor
Steve Worthington**



**Mayor Pro Tem
Javier Figueroa**



**Council Member
Kent Keel**



**Council Member
Ed Wood**



**Council Member
Denise McCluskey**



**Council Member
Stan Flemming**



**Council Member
Caroline Belletti**

COVID-19 Resources

Looking for specific information related to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Here's a list of official sources of information on which you can rely:

U.S. Centers for Disease Control –
Pandemic facts and information

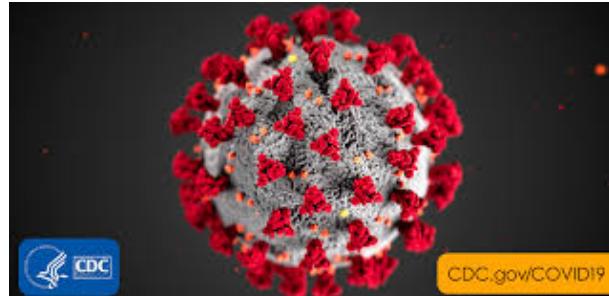
Governor's Office – Details about efforts and legislation specific to Washington

Washington State Department of Health – Updated statistics and testing data

Tacoma-Pierce County Department of Health – Testing sites, vaccine info

Pierce County – Resources for rent, utilities, mortgages, and much more

City of University Place – Pandemic resource updates specific to U.P.



City Hall Holiday Closure

CITY HALL OFFICES WILL
BE CLOSED ON MONDAY,
JANUARY 17 IN
RECOGNITION OF THE
MARTIN LUTHER KING
JR. HOLIDAY.

CITY HALL WILL REOPEN
VIRTUALLY ON TUESDAY,
JANUARY 18 AT 9 A.M.

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University Place City Council



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