

THIS WEEK IN YELM

Official newsletter of the City of Yelm

CHRISTMAS IN THE PARK EXEMPLIFIES COMMUNITY TOGETHERNESS

Thank you to everyone who helped make Christmas in the Park 2019 another fun community event! From the parade to the endless hot cocoa, to the gingerbread contest. We enjoyed all of it!

Everything about the event was perfect – the crowd, the music and the food!

The Yelm Chamber of Commerce did an exceptional job of coordinating with our Police and Public Works departments to re-route traffic and make this popular winter event possible. The festivities kicked off at 9:30 with Grand Marshals Bill and Sara DeVore, followed by nearly 60 businesses and organizations marching down Mainstreet. We can't forget to mention the wonderful announcers, Cory Kolilis, Joseph Richardson and Cyndi Schorno who helped provide a magical Christmas experience.

Following the Display on Mainstreet, the City Park began to fill with families and Christmas tunes, provided by all grade levels of the Yelm Community School's band and choir students. Every year the local businesses work together to feed our community by serving hot chili, cocoa, cookies, hotdogs, and many other goodies throughout the day.



On one end of the park, we had free hot dogs (nearly 3,000 of 'em), cocoa, cookies and other goodies which were all donated by Mr. Doug's restaurant and served up by volunteer staff from Yelm Community School. And under the stage, we had Prairie Baptist Church stirring up delicious chili. The spicy and sweet aroma of ginger and candy filled the Inside the Community Center as we observed little houses framed with candy canes, rooftops made of graham crackers and gumdrops, and lawns made of cotton candy, and an entire SCHOOL! The architecture in this year's contest was top notch!

[See Christmas, Page 2](#)

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

- Christmas in the Park
- Yelm Receives Clean Audit
- City Council Happenings
- Yelm University Exceeds Expectations
- Nelson Named Student of the Month
- Volunteer Nominations Now Open

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Free Movie Toy Drive, Dec. 14
- Vet Vaccine & Microchip Clinic, Dec. 14
- Interfaith Christmas Concert, Dec. 15
- Menorah Lighting, Dec. 23
- City Hall Closed, Dec. 25



Christmas:

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Congratulations to the Yelm Middle School art students for taking home first-place for their outstanding replica of the new Yelm Middle School. We can't wait to see your new school come to life!

On the other side of the Community Center, you could find our dedicated team of City employees providing hundreds of free pictures with Santa. A special 'thank you' is owed to the Community Development and IT staff for making this happen year after year.

Christmas in the Park would not be in its 31st year without the hard work of volunteers, especially co-chairs Cecelia Jenkin and Denise Hendrickson. This event remains possible through the generous donations by our local organizations, schools, and businesses. This includes: Mr. Doug's Restaurant, Yelm Rotary Club, Timberland Regional Library, Lions Club, FFA, FBLA, Yelm Community Schools, Today's Dental, "Shear Perfections Grooming" and "Citizens for the Support of Yelm Schools."

We appreciate all of you who braved the rain to come celebrate the holidays together as a community – it was magnificent to kick off the holiday season with you!



STATE AUDITOR'S OFFICE REPORTS 'CITY'S FINANCIAL POLICIES PROVEN TO BE EFFECTIVE'

The City of Yelm Finance Department continues to make strides in financial transparency and consistency, demonstrated in the clean audit for the fiscal year 2018, issued by the Washington State Auditor's Office.

Washington has had an independent auditor since its territorial days. In 1889, Washington became a state and enshrined the State Auditor's Office in the state Constitution, reflecting a continued commitment to making sure public money is spent wisely and in the public interest. From offices across the state, the state's independent auditors help government work better and maintain public trust.

"We would like to thank the City for the hard work done over the last year to implement prior audit recommendations. The City staff were professional, polite, and created a positive working environment," the State Auditor's Office said in the audit exit interview. "Audit requests were addressed in a timely manner, which facilitated an efficient audit process."

The mission to implement the powerful framework, allowing the City to stiffen internal controls, began in 2017 when the City's financial policies were not as proficient as they are today.

"Since that time, the City of Yelm has created and enacted formal processes, procedures and policies that establish effective controls over financial statement preparation and the preparation of accurate and complete financial statements," the State Auditor's Office said.

In 2017, the City turned the budget from a lengthy software printout into an award winning, comprehensive guiding document, consistent with our mission, vision and values. The City also hired a Senior Accountant, applied secondary review in the Finance Director position, began a program of continuous training, and adopted financial policies that have proven to be effective.



In 2018, the City worked with the State Auditor's Office to review the accounting data for the fiscal years 2014 to 2017 to identify any inaccuracies, resulting in the full reconciliation with all City banking statements for 2016 and 2017. In addition, the City implemented the first biennial budget for the years 2019-2020, and invested in a new financial management software, which enhances the ability to produce accurate annual financial statements and ensure fund balances accurately reflect cash investment balances.

The improvements continued into 2019 by hiring an Assistant Accountant, moving the front counter staff from the Finance Department into the new and separate Customer Service Department, and created a budget schedule to provide better predictability for future budgets.

Holding to the newly established budget calendar, Finance Director Heidi MacDonald provided a budget update at a Council meeting in October and reported the City is on a sustainable path through the first year of the biennium. Budget amendments were unanimously adopted by City Council at the Dec. 10 Council meeting to account for minor revenue and expenditure adjustments in different areas of the budget through the first year.

Council will review and make amendments to the budget again in March 2020, after the Council convenes for a strategic planning retreat to determine policy priorities and initiatives based on existing community goals.



CITY COUNCIL CONDENSED



City Council Condensed is a brief summary of the most recent Yelm City Council meetings with each Council member's roll call votes. Meetings can be viewed on the City of Yelm YouTube channel and agendas can be viewed on yelmwa.gov. If you would like to send a comment to the Mayor or City Council, please visit yelmwa.gov/connect.

Council Unanimously Votes 'Yes' for Yelm Schools

The City Council unanimously adopted a resolution in support of the Yelm Community Schools upcoming replacement levy measure.

The levy makes up 12 percent of the district's annual budget and requires renewal by the vote of the people every four years. The levy will continue to provide essential funding for programs that don't fall under the state mandated "basic education," including special education, athletics, school resource officers, nurses, counselors, and technology programs.



"The state staffing formula only accounts for basic education and does not fully support student needs in Yelm," the Resolution reads in part. "Levies comprise a smaller portion of a district's total budget, but are still integral for district operations."

Voters will be asked to renew the current levy at a rate of \$2.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value, which is \$1.44 less than the levy approved by the community in 2016. Even with the approval of the 2020 levy, the total property tax for Yelm Community Schools will remain less than the tax rate of 2018. The levy will go to the vote of the people February 11, 2020.

The full resolution can be viewed by clicking on the button above or by visiting www.yelmwa.gov

Yays; Unanimous

Council Adopts Unified Development Code Updates to Encourage Multi-Family Housing, and Ensure FCC Compliance

The City Council voted with overwhelming support to adopt updates to the Unified Development Code to help encourage the development of a housing mix and provide more affordable, multi-family units within the City.

The dedicated volunteers on the Planning Commission looked at new housing construction and sales within Yelm City limits and found that most new housing is single family homes with large

square footage within subdivisions, while a mix of housing sizes, townhomes, and multi-family housing are missing. The objective is to help reduce barriers to develop housing varieties and provide more affordable housing opportunities for young families looking to establish roots in the Yelm community.



The update also includes regulations to ensure the City sets design standards, while remaining within compliance of recent Federal Communication Commission rulings.

Yays; EJ Curry, Molly Carmody, Cody Colt, Tadd Stillwell, Tracey Wood. Terry Kaminski.

Nays; Joe DePinto

Council Adopts Budget Amendments for 2019-20 Biennium

City Council voted unanimously to adopt budget amendments for the 2019-20 budget to amend beginning fund balances and carryovers from 2018 for capital projects.

The amendments account for minor revenue and expenditure adjustments different areas of the budget and will bring our beginning fund balances, which were projections when the original biennium budget was adopted, to actual beginning fund balances.

Finance Director Heidi MacDonald reported the

City's revenue for 2019 is projected to come in at 47 percent of the anticipated revenue over the two-year period, meaning the City will budget to receive the other 53 percent in 2020 and equaling 100 percent over the 2019-20 biennium. The City is projected to end 2019 with expenditures coming in at 9 percent under budget, having spent 41 percent of the full budget.

In December of 2018, the Council adopted the first two year budget the City has ever developed to provide better long-term revenue and expenditure forecast. The biennial budget is adopted every even year, while amendments are made every odd year.

Yays; Unanimous

CITY COUNCIL CONDENSED

Non-Action Items

Thurston County Judge Presents Need for New Courthouse

At the Dec. 2 City Council study session, Thurston County Commissioner John Hutchings and Thurston County Judge Brett Buckley presented information about the upcoming bond proposal to build new administrative buildings and a new courthouse in downtown Olympia.

The \$250 million bond measure will construct court and administrative facilities to better meet the needs of Thurston County's growing population, provide additional parking downtown, and will meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The bond will go before the vote of the people February 11, 2020.



Artist Rendering of Potential Future Courthouse

Council Member Inquires About Contract and Finance Policies

During Council updates, at the Dec. 3 City Council meeting, a Council member inquired about provisions for approving contracts for services that exceed \$15,000 based on an old 1995 Resolution.

To help Council gain a better understanding of the current policies adopted by Council in the 2019-20 biennial budget, staff showed Council where the updated policies exist in the budget they unanimously

adopted and recommended a path forward for further review and a possible resolution.

As required by the policies adopted in the budget, Council is required to approve contracts that exceed \$35,000 unless the outcome is specified in the budget and then they can be executed without Council approval. There is not currently a resolution that requires this, meaning the Council would need to put together a resolution or keep adopting the financial policies in each budget cycle.

Homelessness Task Force Plans to Bring Recommendations to Council January of Next Year

An update on the Yelm Homelessness Task Force was requested by a Council Member, which was led by Council Members DePinto and Carmody.

The rest of Council was informed that the Task Force members are still pulling together their research, compiling data, and conducting a thorough analysis as required by the resolution adopted by Council in December last year.

The Task Force's final report is due in December of this year and their formal recommendations will hopefully be ready to be brought forward for Council consideration and deliberation in January 2020.

The meeting will likely be held at the Community Center and will be streamed live and archived on the City of Yelm YouTube channel.



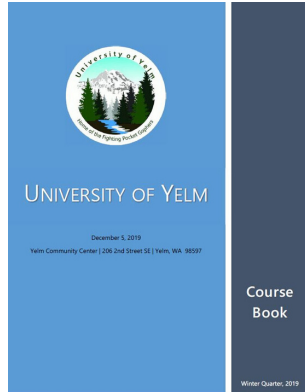
Council Member Inquires About Shopping Cart Theft

At the Dec. 3 City Council study session a Council Member inquired about law enforcement's role in enforcing theft of shopping

carts, stolen from local grocery stores. The Council member was made aware that shopping cart theft is treated in the same fashion as any other item stolen from the grocery store. The store would need to report the shopping cart as stolen before any action could be taken.

YELM UNIVERSITY HAS OFFICIALLY KICKED OFF!

We are truly appreciative of all of the community members who came out to learn about some of the many accomplishments, challenges and opportunities that make our city great!

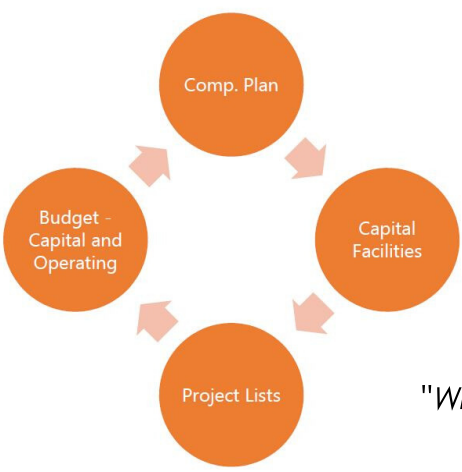


The objective of Yelm University is to provide our citizens with information to gain a better understanding about day-to-day operations and long-range planning of our city. The first session explained the budget development process and how the City works alongside the community to establish priorities and ensure funds are used efficiently on the projects that matter the most.

Our Public Works team described how the City pumps and distributes potable water and the process in which the wastewater is treated and then recycled back into the aquifer.

As our City Administrator Michael Grayum said, "all of us are smarter than one of us. By learning together, listening to each other and working together we can continue making Yelm a great place to live, work, and play."

Be sure to keep an eye on the City of Yelm website, Facebook page, and this newsletter to see when our next session is scheduled, then sign up and join the class. It's free, informational and fun!



"Very informative... highly recommended for the next session"
 – Rick Jones

"What an awesome experience!"
 – Scotty Brown

"I am absolutely looking forward to continuing my education at Yelm University!"
 – Debbie Couthran Fermon

ALICIA NELSON NAMED ROTARY'S NOVEMBER STUDENT OF THE MONTH

Congratulations to Student of the Month Alicia Nelson! Alicia is an aspiring special education teacher and was honored at last night's City Council meeting for her outstanding positive attitude and passion for helping people. Alicia is the FFA Vice President, working countless hours after school to help coordinate the FFA plant sale, while volunteering for other community service activities, including the Adopt a Family program and the community garden project. Way to go, Alicia! Thank you to the Rotary Club of Yelm and the many business partners for highlighting the incredible students at Yelm Community Schools!



KNOW AN EXCEPTIONAL VOLUNTEER? BE SURE TO NOMINATE THEM!

Serve Washington is now accepting nominations for awards to recognize and celebrate exceptional volunteers in communities all across Washington state. Send in your nomination by clicking the AmeriCorps logo to the right.

These awards honor the exemplary service of individuals, groups and organizations that made a significant and measurable contribution to their communities through volunteer service during 2019. Anyone can nominate a volunteer for this recognition.

Honorees will be recognized April 28, 2020, at a ceremony at the Governor's Mansion in Olympia.

"One of Washington's most valuable resources is its people. Their commitment to strengthening our state through service and volunteerism is invaluable," Gov. Jay Inslee said. "I am grateful for their generosity and hope individuals and organizations from across the state will submit nominations so we can honor volunteers for their outstanding commitment."

Serve Washington, the bipartisan Governor-appointed commission on national and community service, provides leadership and vision alongside local volunteer organizations, civic and community groups and units of government to make service a part of the lives of all Washingtonians.



Nominations are accepted in three categories, including Individual, National Service, and Group. Nominations may be submitted online until 5 p.m., Jan. 30, 2020.



Individual: AmeriCorps alumnus, animal welfare, Arts and culture, Disaster preparedness and response, education, environment, health care, Human or social services, public safety, Teen (13-18 years old), veteran, youth (up to 12 years old).

National Service: AmeriCorps member, VISTA member, Senior Corps program participant.

Group: Citizen Corps program, community-based program/organization, employer-based program, service group volunteer family.

To read the entire article, please click on the images to the left or visit www.thurstontalk.com or yelmonline.com for articles by the Nisqually Valley News

YELM JEWELRY STORE OWNER DRAWS GUN, STOPS WOULD-BE ROBBER WITH HELP OF WITNESS

By The Nisqually Valley News

The owner of Farwell's Fine Jewelry in Yelm drew a weapon and halted a would-be robber until police could arrive after the man attempted to steal a ring valued at \$2,400 Wednesday afternoon, according to the Yelm Police Department.



Nisqually Valley News

'WELCOME HOME': RETIRED SGT. AARON BOYLE GETS KEYS TO NEW HOUSE IN YELM

By Eric Rosane
Nisqually Valley News

Retired Army Sgt. Aaron Boyle's life changed forever last week.

This time, it was for the better. Boyle and his family received the keys to their new 2,800-square-foot, specially-adapted house in Yelm on Saturday.



Sgt. Aaron Boyle was welcomed to his new home Saturday, Dec. 7.
Photo by Eric Rosane / Nisqually Valley News

YELM INTERFAITH COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CONCERT CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF SPREADING HOLIDAY CHEER

By Eric Rosane
Nisqually Valley News

State Rep. J.T. Wilcox and Yelm Mayor JW Foster will provide the opening and closing remarks. The opening prayer will be done by Douglas Thomison from United Methodist. Deborah Baker from Crossroads Community Covenant will then read about the birth of Christ.

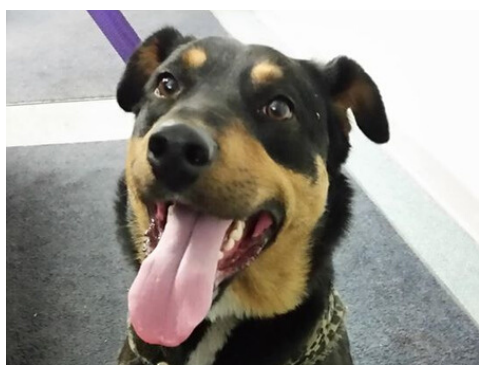


Raffinata, a violin, cello and piano ensemble, will give a short yet special performance. They'll perform "Home for Christmas," and "PataPan." Photo courtesy of Laura Wire



Free Movie Toy Drive Yelm Cinemas, 201 Prairie Park Ln. SE Dec. 14, 9 a.m.

Come and enjoy a free movie while supporting local families! Admission is a new, unwrapped toy; kiddos will also enjoy a free kids pack (popcorn, drink and candy) and get to meet Santa! This year, we will also be collecting art supplies for the Yelm Boys and Girls Club. We can't wait to see you there! This event is generously sponsored by Yelm Cinemas, Timberland Bank and the Nisqually Valley News. Toys will be delivered to Yelm Community Services for disbursement to local families. Art supplies will be delivered to the Yelm Boys and Girls Club.



Vaccine Clinic & Pictures with Santa Yelm Farm & Pet, and Yelm Veterinary Hospital Dec. 14, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Yelm Farm & Pet and Yelm Veterinary Hospital will host a low cost vaccine & microchip clinic for Yelm area pet owners and will host Santa pictures. The City of Yelm highly encourages pet owners to microchip their pets. The chip helps our animal control personnel reunite lost family members quickly and efficiently.



Menorah Lighting Yelm City Park, 115 Mosman Ave SE Dec. 23, 5 p.m.

We are honored to have the Chabad Jewish Center host the second annual Menorah lighting in celebration of Chanukah – also spelled Hanukkah – beginning at 5 p.m. December 23 at the Yelm City Park. The Chabad Jewish Center encourages everyone, with all different faiths, to come together for a night of celebration with latkes and other traditional Jewish treats. The event is free but they do ask that you RSVP by clicking on the image to the left. Mozel tov!



City Offices Closed for Christmas Yelm City Hall 106 2nd St. Dec. 25, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

City Hall and all other City Offices are closed for Christmas and will reopen on December 26. From all of us at the City of Yelm, we hope you have a Merry Christmas. The amount of effort that is put in by our community to ensure everyone in the Yelm area has presents under the tree is truly inspiring. Thank you to everyone who contributed!

If you have items of interest for us to include in future issues of "This Week in Yelm" or other questions or concerns, please contact: Communications Specialist Andrew Kollar by emailing andrewk@yelmwa.gov or calling 360-458-8420.