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**LYNNWOOD TIMES**

Sound Transit board approves property tax increase, cost overruns up to \$34.5 billion **P2**

Sound Transit has no plans to add parking to Lynnwood light rail station **P15**

Real News ⚡  
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# Alleged wage theft at ENSO, city leadership censors union's warnings



ENSO, a mixed-use development being constructed in Lynnwood's City Center. Lynnwood Times | Mario Lotmore

By KIENAN BRISCOE

**LYNNWOOD**—When Julio secured a job laying drywall for Lynnwood's upcoming multi-family development ENSO, in the city's bustling downtown core known as City Center, he was ecstatic to have the opportunity and be a part of something bigger for Lynnwood's vision. But when he received his first paycheck, a little over three months ago, he immediately noticed something wasn't right.

From the first day on the job site, according to Julio, his employer laid the ground rules that there was an expectancy to work 9-10 hours

a day and "if you didn't like it then find a new job." However, his employers also made it clear that they would not be paid overtime when workers were asked to work 9, or even more, hours a day.

These ground rules materialized in Julio's paychecks from the start, when he would work 45 to sometimes 50 hours a week without being paid an overtime rate. What's more, his pay checks during this period read "40" despite his timecards telling a different story.

Julio is a nickname we've given to an actual GMH LLC worker (the subcontractor hired on for multi-

ple construction projects at ENSO) to honor his request for anonymity, fearing there may be consequences for speaking out on the unequitable work conditions he, and many of his co-workers, face daily. It's the very fear of repercussion, he suspects, that keeps the 50-60 GMH workers currently on the ENSO project from speaking out against discrepancies in their pay despite many, if not all, of them knowing exactly what is going on behind the scenes.

**BACKGROUND ON THE ENSO PROJECT**

In April, 2024, the Lynnwood City Council unanimously

approved Mayor Christine Frizzell to enter into an eight-year, \$6.4 million, Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) for American Capital Group LLC (ACG Acquisitions), the developer of ENSO – a new mixed-use building in downtown Lynnwood that will have commercial real estate, parking, and apartments when it opens next year.

ENSO, formerly Kinect II, is currently undergoing construction at 198th Street Southwest and 40th Avenue West. Once completed, the seven-floor building will have 318 apartments (one-

*Continued* **PAGE 16**

# Former Sheriff launches nonprofit to help troubled, directionless youth

By KIENAN BRISCOE

**SNOHOMISH COUNTY**—Former Snohomish County Sheriff Adam Fortney, his wife Jill, and Jose Garcia, who owns Team United MMA in Lake Stevens, have partnered up in launching a brand-new nonprofit called the LEAD the Way Program aimed at helping Snohomish County youths develop leadership skills, seek mentorship, or otherwise just keep out of trouble.

The nonprofit is an extension of a program kickstarted by Fortney while serving as Snohomish County Sheriff, from 2020 through 2023, also called Lead the Way, but no longer under the banner of local government.

LEAD stands for leadership, encouragement, and direction for youths living in Snohomish County.

Earlier this month, on Wednesday, October 8, 12 youths (aged 13-17) met for the first time since the nonprofit's founding at the Sno-Isle Skills Tech Center in what will be the start of an eight-week program. The first session was primarily just an opportunity to get to know the youths and have an opportunity to share the overall scope and mission of the weeks to come which includes guest speakers, mentorship, and guidance.

Jill Fortney came prepared with specific questions Wednesday such as "what are challenges you see in your own family," to get the kids thinking about why they're there and what they are hope to accomplish.

"As I told them Wednesday, you will get what they want out of this program. If they want a mentor, if they want someone to bounce leadership skills off of, if they need help in decision-making, we will provide that to them by the

*Continued* **PAGE 11**

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# Sound Transit board approves property tax increase, cost overruns up to \$34.5 billion

By SPENCER PERRY

**[THE CENTER SQUARE]**—Residents in King, Pierce and Snohomish counties will pay more in property taxes next year, as the Sound Transit Board of Directors has approved a 1% property tax increase as the agency faces an estimated more than \$30 billion in cost overruns on its Sound Transit 3 expansion projects.

Sound Transit can raise property taxes without voter approval because it is authorized to implement a statutory 1% annual increase to its property tax levy, which voters approved as part of the 2016 ST3 ballot measure.

The Sound Transit Board of Directors approved the tax increase on Thursday with 15 affirmative votes. There was no

discussion amongst the board prior to the vote.

The 1% property tax increase will raise Sound Transit's 2026 property tax revenue by 3.8%, from \$176.2 million in 2025 to \$183 million.

The increase in revenue comes as the agency faces up to \$34.5 billion in cost overruns for its capital projects. This was updated from an August forecast of \$30 billion in long-term costs as previously reported by The Center Square.

According to Sound Transit, this increase is necessary to address the funding shortfall and keep delayed light-rail projects on schedule.

The maximum allowable rate the agency can impose is 25 cents per \$1,000

property tax, which would cost the average King County homeowner \$220 annually, \$140 for average Pierce County homeowners, or \$187 for a Snohomish County homeowner. The estimated 2026 levy rate is 16 cents per \$1,000.


Stephanie Ball, Sound Transit's director of financial planning and analysis, continued to warn board members that if they chose to reject the annual 1% property tax increase, it would reduce the agency's projected revenue by approximately \$47 million through 2046.

Ball noted that in the case of Seattleites' total property tax bill, Sound Transit only makes up 1.8% of the total annual payment.

Sound Transit's 2026 budget proposal

totals \$3.3 billion, with tax revenues making up 75% of total revenue for the agency. Out of planned expenditures for next year, approximately \$1.9 billion is set to go toward system expansions, representing 55% of total expenditures.


Sound Transit's total service hours will increase by 29% next year. Agency staff also found that additional operating funding will be needed for security and services during the week in which Seattle hosts FIFA World Cup matches in 2026.



Scan to watch Sound Transit October 23, 2023, meeting of the 1% property tax increase by the Board.

# Community Transit unveils its \$560 million 2026-2027 biennium budget

By MARIO LOTMORE



Scan to review Community Transit Budget.

**SNOHOMISH COUNTY**—Community Transit has released its proposed biennial budget for fiscal years 2026 and 2027, marking the agency's first shift to a two-year planning cycle. The plan, presented by Chief Executive Officer Ric Ilgenfritz, focuses on continued service improvements, infrastructure investments, and a transition to in-house operations amid economic uncertainties. The budget aligns with the agency's Transit Development Plan and aims to support long-term goals through 2050, including zero-emission initiatives and enhanced safety measures.

"As we mark 50 years of serving Snohomish County residents, we look forward to adding more bus service, more transit security officers, and more ways for people to get around safely and quickly," said Community Transit CEO Ric Ilgenfritz.

Community Transit proposes balanced budgets with fully funded reserves and operating revenues (\$282.1 million in 2026 and \$290.3 million in 2027) exceeding operating expenditures (\$277.2 million in 2026 and \$282.9 million in 2027) both years.

Learn more and share your input on the proposed budget by November 14:

- Visit the website: [ctgo.org/budget](http://ctgo.org/budget)
- Email: [budget@commtrans.org](mailto:budget@commtrans.org)
- Social: Facebook @communitytransit, Instagram @communitytransit and LinkedIn @Community Transit
- Mail: Community Transit, Administrative Office, 2312 W Casino Rd, Everett, WA 98204
- Call: 425-353-7433 (RIDE)
- Public hearing: Community Transit Board Meeting, 3 p.m., November 6 (sign up at [communitytransit.org/how-to-attend-a-meeting](http://communitytransit.org/how-to-attend-a-meeting)). The meeting will be in a hybrid format, with in-person attendance and an online option available. Visit our Board of Directors page and click on Upcoming Meetings for meeting materials and information on how to participate or listen.)

### Key Accomplishments from 2025

The proposal builds on a year of notable progress in 2025, as outlined in Ilgenfritz's budget message. Among the highlights:

- Implementation of service changes from the "2024 and Beyond" plan, which included network adjustments following the arrival of Link light rail in Snohomish County.
- Upgrades to Swift bus rapid transit (BRT) stations, introduction of onboard signage and driver barrier doors on Swift buses, and advancements in planning for Swift Green Line extensions and the new Swift Gold Line.

- Monitoring and refinements to Zip Shuttle microtransit pilots launched in late 2024 in Arlington, Darrington, and Lake Stevens.
- Positioning bus and Zip services as key connectors to regional light rail, especially during the Washington State Department of Transportation's Revive I-5 construction.
- Successful operation of bus bridges to support Link light rail during disruptions.
- Progress toward zero-emission

- goals, including a side-by-side test of battery electric and hydrogen fuel cell buses, preparations for expanding the battery electric fleet, and facility designs for charging infrastructure.
- Expansion of the Vanpool program with a pilot integrating electric vehicles.
- Development of a bus stop improvement plan focusing on accessibility and replacements.

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## LYNNWOOD TIMES

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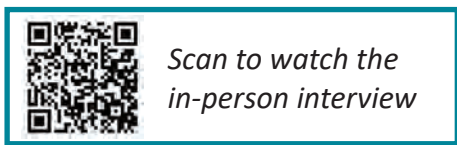
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# Lynnwood Times election interview: Bryce Owings

By KIENAN BRISCOE



**LYNNWOOD**—With ballots beginning to mail out, and the November 4 General Elections just a little over two weeks away, Lynnwood Times Senior Reporter Kienan Briscoe sat down with Lynnwood City Council candidate Bryce Owings to hear where he stands on certain topics the city is currently facing.

Bryce Owings, is a foreman, certified journeyman carpenter, and family man who served as the Political Action Committee Chair for the Carpenters Union Local 425 prior to running, shared that his priorities are managing the budget and public safety.

Owings is running for the Position 3 seat currently held by Lynnwood City Council Vice President Joshua Binda. The Lynnwood Times invited Binda to attend an interview but did not receive a response back.

Owings was first asked how he is uniquely qualified to serve on the council and what, if elected, his top priorities would be.

Owings referenced his time on the Carpenters Local 425, serving as treasurer, as a delegate, and chair of the political action committee, all of which has taught him how politics work within Lynnwood and its surrounding cities.

He also roped in his past, how he struggled with addiction which, in turn, led him down a path of criminal convictions. He added that these experiences, and how he subsequently overcame his addiction and set his life back on track to be an outstanding citizen, carpenter, teacher, and father, have allowed him to understand Lynnwood’s mental health and drug dependence issues on a deeper, more intimate, level.

“I suffered on and off for a good 10 years from drug addiction, homelessness, those kinds of things. And I can bring that lived experience to the table as in, what worked for me. Obviously, what worked for me is not necessarily going to work for everybody. But, you know, I can bring some new inventive ideas to the council, to the city, on what works and what doesn’t work,” said Owings. “It’s easy to just read something in a book, but when you’ve lived it and you’ve gotten over it yourself, it’s a lot different.”

Owings added that based on his lived experience he’s taken from it a real “passion to help people in need.”

“Nobody deserves to live a life like that and I’m going to really [drive] headway into that,” said Owings.

### Lynnwood’s budget dilemma

According to Finance Director Michelle Meyer, the city of Lynnwood is facing a \$10.7 million budget deficit for the 2025 budget cycle that the city council approved with a vote of 4-3 November 2024.

Even with Mayor Christine Frizzell’s plan to address that shortfall, this still leaves a budget shortfall of about \$3 million through 2025 and \$8 million through 2026.

Owings was asked how he, if elected, would propose to address these shortfalls.

“We’re going to have to use some inventive ideas. I struggle with saying that it’s going to get fixed overnight. I feel like this is going to be kind of an ongoing thing,” said Owings. “We’re going to have to constantly be working on it for the next few years, if not even longer.”

Just one of Owings’ “inventive” ideas is a parks sponsorship system which, he said, could generate revenue while

building out the city’s green spaces. How this would work in practice, he said, is allow companies to get their names on a plaque in city parks for a donated price. He would also be open to having advertisements in park restrooms.

Owings would also suggest putting city-run events, such as the Fair on 44th Street, on pause until the city gets its budget under control.

“I hate saying that. I took my kids there. We had a great time. And it’s a great time every time we do go. But, you know, we’ve got to fix this budget right now,” said Owings. “And every officer that was working that event was on overtime. Could we really have afforded that? Maybe we should have explored maybe skipping certain things this year...It’s going to be tough. We’re going to have to make some hard calls.”

### Restoring trust in city government

The city of Lynnwood has been the subject of various political scandals involving city council members and controversies regarding hiring practices of various directors to Lynnwood departments.

Owings was then asked how he, as a council member, would work on restoring the public’s trust in city government.

“First, I’m going to be available. From my constant door knocking during this campaign, I’ve heard a lot of people say they just don’t feel like their voices are heard. I keep reminding people to hold on to my phone number. I could be an email away too, but I want to be a phone call away,” said Owings. “I want to be very accessible to the public so that way I can bring their issues to the forefront right away.”

Owings also suggested the City’s website track council members’ voting records so the public could easily access whether or not their decision-making properly aligns with their values.

“Sure, it’s all on public records, but you’ve got to do a lot of digging. If we can make that accessible immediately and easier to find, I think that that would restore some of that trust,” said Owings.

### Youth Violence in Lynnwood

Youth violence is an ongoing concern in Lynnwood with statistics showing an increase in juvenile case reports and arrests driven by factors such as gang activity, assaults, and shootings.

The Council recently put forth a Youth Council, spearheaded by council members Derica Escamilla and Joshua Binda, but Owings was asked what could be done in addition to.

For one, Owings said, the city does not have enough officers to police the streets which is why he is championing for a restoration of public safety and is why he was endorsed by the Lynnwood Police Guild.

“If people don’t feel safe leaving their house, then what good is anything else, right? But that’s just reactionary, and that’s always the easy scapegoat, Band-Aid answer,” said Owings. “Long-term solutions, I want to look into advocating for trade schools, apprenticeships, those sort of things for kids when they start getting closer to getting out of high school.”

As a tradesman himself, Owings knows that college is not always accessible for most folk but if he could teach kids that blue-collar works is obtainable maybe they could see they have a future, he continued.

“Statistically, when you get people starting to make better wages, they tend to break the law less. So, if we could figure out career options for these younger folks, that could be their focus,” said Owings.

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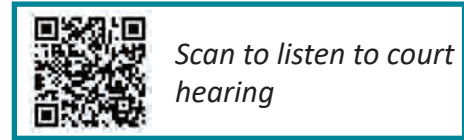
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# Brother of Lynnwood Councilwoman faces theft charge in alleged porch piracy amid conflict-of-interest concerns

By MARIO LOTMORE



Lynnwood lawmaker, City Councilwoman Derica Escamilla's brother Joshua De La Cruz, speaking with Lynnwood Police with a torch in his right hand during the police raid at her home in May of 2024. Source: Lynnwood Police Department Body Cam footage.

**LYNNWOOD**—In the early hours of August 14, 2025, Joshua De La Cruz, the 37-year-old brother of Lynnwood lawmaker City Councilwoman Derica Escamilla, was arrested on a charge of third-degree theft following an alleged incident involving stolen packages and mail from a residential porch. The case, handled by the Lynnwood Police Department, has raised questions about potential conflicts of interest within the city's judicial and prosecutorial systems, given De La Cruz's familial ties to a sitting council member.

Lynnwood lawmaker, City Councilwoman Derica Escamilla's brother Joshua De La Cruz, speaking with Lynnwood Police with a torch in his right hand during the police raid at her home in May of 2024. Source: Lynnwood Police Department Body Cam footage.

According to a police report authored by Lynnwood Police Sergeant Jerome Riener, the incident unfolded just before dawn when officers responded to a 911 call from resident Roman Barlet at approximately 5:13 a.m. Barlet reported that two females and a male had stolen a package from the front door of his Lynnwood home and were also checking nearby mailboxes. He provided video footage of the theft to Officer Riener.

Officers arrived in the area around 5:17 a.m. and spotted three individuals matching the description walking southbound on 48th Ave. W near 188th St. SW. De La Cruz, along with two women identified as Sherel Baker and Tricia Graff, were detained. De La Cruz was observed holding a dark clothing item, later found to contain mail from nearby addresses not belonging to him. Graff was carrying two small green boxes, and a third matching box was discovered on De La Cruz during a search. Barlet confirmed the stolen items were three boxes of gaming cards.

The video evidence showed a woman, consistent with Baker's appearance—

dressed in dark clothing with her hair in a bun—approaching the porch, grabbing the package, and fleeing. Shortly after, the trio was seen passing the residence, with one individual checking a mailbox.

Additional mail recovered from the suspects included items addressed to residents of several nearby homes. Victims contacted by police provided statements denying permission for anyone to possess their mail.

All three suspects were arrested for third-degree theft, a gross misdemeanor.

De La Cruz, who lives next door to Escamilla, had an outstanding warrant from Mill Creek and another from Grant County, was booked into Lynnwood jail. Graff was cited and released at the scene after the items were recovered. Baker was transported to the Lynnwood Police Department for further search, where additional mail was found concealed in her clothing; she was then cited and released.

Officers also booked two knives found on De La Cruz—a mini butterfly knife and another with a blade over 3.5 inches—deemed illegal to possess, along with a debit card in the name of Thu Nguyen, for which no owner could be contacted.

The case took an unusual turn during De La Cruz's arraignment on August 15, 2025, at Lynnwood Municipal Court. Lynnwood Court Commissioner Robert

Grant, upon confirming De La Cruz's relation to Councilwoman Escamilla, recused himself, stating he needed to "find someone else to cover this matter."

The city prosecutor also cited a conflict, noting their office's involvement. Escamilla, as a council member, participates in decisions affecting the budgets and operations of the court and city attorney's office, prompting recusals to avoid any appearance of impropriety. De La Cruz was released on his own recognizance without bail.

At a subsequent hearing on September 10, 2025, before a new judge, De La Cruz's request to reschedule the proceedings to November 5, 2025—the day after the general election—was granted. Court documents indicate he is seeking a jury trial. The case remains pending.

De La Cruz's criminal history, as documented by the Washington State Patrol, includes several prior arrests and convictions.

On February 9, 2025, he was arrested for second-degree burglary, a Class B felony, by the Edmonds Police Department, with the case still pending. He was convicted on June 2, 2024, of attempted second-degree assault, a Class C felony. Earlier records show a November 20, 2008, misdemeanor conviction for second-degree criminal trespass in Grant County, and a June 2, 2004, Class C felony conviction for attempted second-degree assault, also in Grant County.

Allegations of gang affiliations have also surfaced in connection with De La Cruz.

In early November 2024, an anonymous

letter was distributed to city officials, including the Lynnwood City Attorney's Office, Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Municipal Court Judge Valerie Boufflou, Police Chief Cole Langdon, Mayor Christine Frizzell, the City Council, and the Alderwood Boys & Girls Club. The letter claimed De La Cruz was a known drug dealer and active member of the Norteños, a Latino street gang originating in northern California, as described by the U.S. Department of Justice. The members of the Norteños gang were initially part of the CA prison gang, Mexican Mafia, but later formed their own group when they were not protected or treated fairly in prison.

Escamilla publicly denied these allegations to the Lynnwood Times back in November 2024 stating that her brother does not live with her and has not committed crimes in her home. She acknowledged he stayed with her temporarily but was asked to leave after an incident involving a stolen credit card charge, which was later dropped.

She described her brother's past as "checked" but said he left that lifestyle behind upon becoming a father, though he recently associated with "troublemakers." Escamilla shared that her brother was once listed as a gang member in Eastern Washington due to associations with Norteños but claims he has no such ties since moving to Lynnwood.

Other incidents involving De La Cruz at Escamilla's residence have been documented in law enforcement records obtained by the Lynnwood Times. On May 12, 2024, he was present during a police raid at Escamilla's home, where officers, with drawn AR-15s and a less lethal 40 mm rubber bullet projectile device, attempted an arrest of a known fugitive staying on Escamilla's property. Additional police-related observations include:

- April 19, 2024, at 12:15 a.m.: Law enforcement surveilling the home of Escamilla for a fugitive observed De La Cruz smoking what they believed to be methamphetamine.
- July 24, 2024, at 6:55 p.m.: Escamilla contacted Lynnwood Police to retrieve her car keys as these were in the possession of her brother, De La Cruz at the time of his arrest. The Lynnwood Times is investigating allegations that Escamilla's vehicle has been used in numerous criminal activities, including armed robbery.

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# Lynnwood Times election interview: Dio Boucsiequez

By KIENAN BRISCOE



**LYNNWOOD**—With just over two weeks left until the November 4 General Elections, the Lynnwood Times invited Lynnwood CC candidate Dio Boucsiequez back for another interview with a new set of questions on his platform and policies.

The first time the Lynnwood Times interviewed Boucsiequez was just before the Primaries. The Times also reached out to Boucsiequez's opponent, Derica Escamilla, but she was unable to attend last week's event, nor did she respond to our request for a follow-up interview.

Boucsiequez believes that Lynnwood, at its core, is a blue-collar community. He wants to be able to maintain its traditional neighborhood aspect that he fell in love with when he and his family first moved here ten years ago. At the same time, he continued, the city needs to adjust for growth. He is proposing to do this by maintaining single family zoning to incentivize home ownership, while also zoning 196th and Highway 99 for condos and apartments to allow for low-income housing options and absorb a potential population boom.

As far as economic development, Boucsiequez has an idea of creating, what he calls, "economic opportunity zones" within the city that could attract new businesses to Lynnwood. In these proposed zones, which he is suggesting could be along Highway 99, the city would offer a sales tax deferral to allow businesses to delay paying taxes associated with new construction. This would apply to new businesses and new housing.

If elected, one of the first things Boucsiequez wants to request of his colleagues is to conduct a fiscal and process audit on City Administration to make sure the city is operating as effectively and efficiently as possible. This audit would be conducted by a third party, and its findings would guide the course of budgetary spending actions in the future.

Boucsiequez is a 10-year resident of Lynnwood, holds his bachelor's degree from the University of Washington, and is a union member of UFCW 3000. His priorities are budgeting, growth management, trust and transparency, fostering the arts/culture/entertainment, and public safety.

## Balancing the budget

According to Finance Director Michelle Meyer, the city of Lynnwood is facing a \$10.7 million budget deficit for the 2025 budget cycle that the city council approved with a vote of 4-3 in November 2024. Factors contributing to these current shortfalls include:

- Lower than projected revenues from sources such as sales tax, fees, and red-light camera tickets
- Rising operational costs for utilities maintenance
- Delays in major private investment, such as Northline Village, resulting in less revenue generation for the city
- A plan was put forth and is being implemented by Mayor Christine Frizzell, which involves:
- Layoffs of nine employees and elimination of seasonal staffing
- A 6% reduction for the police department
- A 10% reduction for all other general fund departments
- Reducing non-personal expenditures, travel training, and eliminating non-critical purchases

Still, this leaves a budget shortfall of \$3 million through 2025 and \$8 million through 2026. Boucsiequez was asked how he would plan to resolve the immediate, and long-term, shortfall.

"We have to be able to cut costs in the city, and it's going to hurt. But it's a good first step, but I believe that there are other ways that we can try to workshop things on the city council with my new colleagues," said Boucsiequez.

Boucsiequez is advocating for a third-party financial audit of the city first and foremost, to ensure city government is spending residents' tax dollars as efficiently as possible.

## Restoring trust in local government

Regarding restoring trust in city government, Boucsiequez seeks to have integrity and honesty with people.

"We have a sitting council member who denies that their dog ever bit anyone, even though there's photographic proof and video evidence of their dog biting someone. That dog is a public safety threat. And I've been very honest, one could even say almost to my detriment, about me, about who I am," said Boucsiequez. "One of the biggest things, the main thing that we have to do is we have to have council members, elected officials, who have integrity and who are honest with the people about why they're voting for something in particular... because one of the worst things that can happen with an elected official is that they lie. When elected officials lie to the public, you lose that trust in the system overall."

## Youth Violence

Regarding youth violence, which is an ongoing concern in Lynnwood with statistics showing an increase in juvenile case reports and arrests driven by factors such as gang activity, assaults, and shootings, Boucsiequez was asked how he would tackle the ongoing issue.

Boucsiequez rejected Council members Joshua Binda and Derica Escamilla's creation of a Youth Council, saying he doesn't think "it's even going to get us anywhere" because it will only target a small percentage of youth who are interested in sports and politics.

A better solution, according to Boucsiequez, is to have more after school activity options especially activities in the trades that could open themselves up to potential job opportunities, either through apprenticeships or educational workshops.

"You have to give kids things to do to occupy their time, and especially young boys, in order to curtail that violent behavior," said Boucsiequez.

Boucsiequez would also like to see the return of School Resource Officers.

Continued PAGE 8

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As a proud 10-year Lynnwood resident, I'm running to restore your confidence in our city government. I am dedicated to promoting transparency, accountability, and collaborative leadership to ensure Lynnwood remains a safe and vibrant city for all residents..

In recent years, our city has been embroiled in numerous controversies, diverting attention away from pressing issues such as rising property taxes, public safety concerns including escalating youth and gang-related violence, and the lack of diverse entertainment options.

In 2018, I achieved a significant milestone by becoming the first member of my family to earn a college degree having graduated from the University of Washington with a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science, History, and Communication.

More importantly, I am a devoted family man, the proud son of Mexican immigrants; and through financial discipline, paid off \$20,000 in student loans. I assist my parents in caring for my special needs sister while maintaining a full-time job. As a blue-collar worker endorsed by my union, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW 3000), I am acutely aware of the increasing financial burdens faced by working- and middle-class residents in Lynnwood.

I am the labor, police, and fire-endorsed candidate in the Position 1 race. Besides UFCW 3000, I am endorsed by the Lynnwood Police Guild (solely endorsed), South County Fire (solely endorsed), and six other unions. With Lynnwood being the retail hub of Snohomish County, I am solely endorsed by the Washington Retail Association.

I am committed to being that voice on the Lynnwood City Council who will prioritize the well-being and affordability of our community members. With my unique blend of life experience—from living homeless for a few months as kid to a college-educated department lead—I am well-equipped to make informed data-driven decisions on the council benefiting Lynnwood residents.

Together, we will continue to unlock Lynnwood's potential. I ask for your vote.

Paid for by Dio for City Council, 21016 49th Ave W, Lynnwood, WA 98036



# Eight former Lynnwood leaders slam Frizzell's failures, endorse George Hurst to be next Mayor

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

As former leaders and long-time public servants of the City of Lynnwood, we urge you to vote for George Hurst for Mayor.

The city and community cannot afford another 4 years of Christine Frizzell as Mayor. We have witnessed firsthand the incumbent's incompetence and the damage she has done during her one term as Mayor.

What distinguishes George from Christine are several things. George has a positive vision for Lynnwood's future. Christine does not. George is open and collaborative. Christine works alone without input from the community or staff. George builds relationships and trust. Christine doesn't care about relationships or trust. Long time and experienced City employees have left because of the toxic workplace. As a three-term Council Member, George has



a proven track record of fiscal responsibility. Christine, on the other hand, is responsible for creating a \$21 million budget hole that will lead to massive cuts in services to the community.

Here are a few more examples of her poor leadership:

- The Mayor recently proposed another tremendous increase in City Property

taxes. During her four-year term, City property taxes will have gone up 158%.

- She has imposed a hiring freeze, leaving the Lynnwood Police with 20 vacancies.
- She has ignored City hiring practices for leadership positions. She relied on petty biases, instead of hiring based on talent.
- She has gutted the Lynnwood Senior Center to

correct her fiscal mismanagement.

We appeal to the Lynnwood community to recognize the long-term harm caused by this leadership vacuum. Please join us as we call for accountability, transparency, and a renewed commitment to the city's residents and taxpayers by voting for George Hurst, Mayor of Lynnwood.

Sincerely,

- Art Ceniza, former City Administrator*
- Lynn Sordel, former Parks Department Director*
- Paulette Revoir, former Municipal Court Administrator*
- Karen Fitzthum Rebbe former Procurement Manager/City Clerk*
- Lisa Harrison former City Council Executive Assistant*
- Tammy Bodmer former Human Resources Administrative Assistant*
- Ted Hikel former City Council Member*
- Jim Smith former City Council Member*

## GEORGE HURST MESSAGE TO VOTERS

October 25, 2025

Dear Friends,

My wife Pam and I have lived in Lynnwood for over 30 years. All four of our kids graduated from Lynnwood High School. For over a decade I have served this City on the Planning Commission and City Council. Today, it saddens me to watch our current Mayor lead us into this budget crisis. It is time for new leadership!

We cannot tax our way out of this mess. The Mayor is proposing another huge City property tax increase. She also wants to raise the utility taxes you pay, increase the cost of going to your recreation center and hit local businesses with higher fees. None of her plans demonstrate fiscal responsibility!

I know I do not have all the answers on recovering from this unprecedented \$20+ million-dollar deficit. If elected, I will establish a panel of experts, individuals with years of experience in creating city budgets. We will get recommendations that will be put into action. In addition, I will end the Department silos at City Hall. Employees will be brought back to work in the office, and I will listen to their ideas on ways to collaborate for the common good. Your phone calls into the city will be answered and questions will be addressed immediately.

Lynnwood is a wonderful City with an exceptional future and your input matters. I will be holding town hall meetings throughout Lynnwood as we work together to restore hope, retain the vision for a great City and rebuild confidence in your elected City government.

Election day is November 4<sup>th</sup>. I ask you for your support and your vote for me, George Hurst, for Lynnwood Mayor.

Thank you,

George Hurst



Scan to Learn more at [electhurst4lynnwood.com](http://electhurst4lynnwood.com)



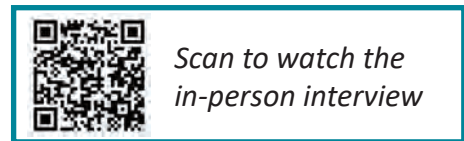
Paid for by ElectHurst4Lynnwood, 4027 184th PL SW, Lynnwood, Washington 98037





# Lynnwood Times election interview: Mayoral candidate George Hurst

By KIENAN BRISCOE



**LYNNWOOD**—With ballots beginning to mail out, and the November 4 General Elections just a little over two weeks away, Lynnwood Times Senior Reporter Kienan Briscoe sat down with Lynnwood Mayoral candidate George Hurst to hear where he stands on certain topics the city is currently facing.

The Lynnwood Times also reached out to current Mayor, and Mayoral candidate, Christine Frizzell, but she was unable to make it to last week's event.

George Hurst is currently in his third term on the Lynnwood City Council where he's served as the Council President three times. Hurst has also served on the Snohomish County 911 Board, Community Transit Board, Puget Sound Regional Council Executive Board, Snohomish Emergency Radio Advisory Board, was Chair of the Lynnwood Finance Committee, Chair of the Lynnwood/Fire District 1 RFA Planning Commission, and has invested his free time in various community service pursuits such as the Lynnwood Transportation and Traffic Task Force, the Lynnwood Planning Commission, Sunrise Christian Center, Leadership Snohomish County and Second Chance Foundation Board of Directors.

Separate to his elected and volunteerism experience, Hurst believes he is qualified to serve the residents of Lynnwood as Mayor based on his profes-

sional experience, working 30-years as a Factory Agent for a lighting manufacturer where he dealt with million-dollar projects, in the municipal, private, and military sectors.

"If you ever want to be challenged, it's dealing with the military," Hurst joked. "I have a lot of background to let me deal with situations and problems."

### Budget dilemma

When asked about the budget, which has been a hot topic in Lynnwood as of late due to the city's \$10.7 million deficit for the 2025 budget cycle, according to Finance Director Michelle Meyer citing factors like lower than projected revenues from sources such as sales tax, fees, and red light cameras, rising operational costs for utilities and maintenance, and delays in major private investments such as Northline Village, resulting in less revenue generation for the city.

Current Mayor Christine Frizzell put forth a plan to course correct, involving layoffs of nine employees, eliminating seasonal staffing, a 6% reduction to the police department, a 10% reduction for all other general fund departments, and reductions to non-personal expenditures, travel, training, and eliminating non-critical purchases. Still, this leaves a budget shortfall of \$3 million through 2025 and \$8 million through 2026.

However, Hurst claims that despite Mayor Frizzell stating the city is experiencing a decline in revenue, this isn't the case, adding that Lynnwood has had "more revenue coming in this year" than last.

"The problem is those poor econom-

ic forecasts that created this big gap that we're now dealing with, and really, for me, the gap is almost closer to \$5 million for 2025. That is the challenge because I think some of these faulty economic forecasts are not going to be fixed by some sort of economic boom or something like that," said Hurst. "We're going to have to really deal with some hard decisions in 2025, and we're running out of time to make these decisions."

Hurst continued that Finance Director Meyer has stated that if the city changes its financial policy by limiting its reserve fund to two months (instead of the current two and-a-half), that the city will still comply with the state (Washington State has requirements for cities to finish a budget season with a balanced budget).

One of Hurst's solutions is to take a "hard look" at salary increases and promotions – with 70% of the city's expenditures going towards wages and benefits, something he claims the current Mayor has "not even addressed". With most of Lynnwood's revenue coming from sales tax Hurst also said that needs to be protected and, with it, public safety because "people who feel safe in this city will come and spend money in it."

Related to the budget and public safety, Hurst revealed that Lynnwood Police Chief, Cole Langhdon, was recently told his department needs an additional 5% reduction by not funding eight Officer positions (bringing the total reductions to 11%), which is something he wants to address.

"This is probably the reason why the Lynnwood Police Guild has given me

the sole endorsement on the mayor race. I think they have a real lack of confidence in this mayor," said Hurst.

### Retaining city staffing and restoring trust in city government

Hurst was then asked about the several city executive leadership positions that have been left vacant as of late, including the resignation of former Council member Shirley Sutton (who cited a lack of leadership in the current administration as her reason), former City Administrator Art Ceniza, and Parks and Rec Deputy Director Sarah Olsen who retired after Joel Faber was appointed to the Director position despite former Director Lynn Sordel's recommendations.

Hurst chalks this up to an "atmosphere at City Hall that is not conducive to having people stay there," he said.

"I know there have been positions that the mayor specifically has forced people out. You can talk about the assistant city administrator position, procurement city clerk position, the strategic planner. Those were all people that were forced out by this mayor. And so this is the atmosphere I think that's there, is that people, staff are really somewhat hesitant to even push back on the mayor because she's shown that she can force people out," said Hurst. "I think that the morale at the city is really low right now, not only because of layoffs, but because of just this kind of person in charge that doesn't want to listen to people."

Hurst continued that's one of the first things he plans to do if elected: open

*Continued* **PAGE 14**

## THE MAYOR'S PLAN TO FIX THE \$20+ MILLION DEFICIT SHE CREATED

City of Lynnwood General Fund 2026 Revenue Options 10.20.25			
Revenue source	Description	Potential Revenue	Notification Period / Implementation Delay
Regular Property Tax Levy	Levied annually through Ordinance. Levy banked capacity plus additional 1% allowable	\$3,899,578	Adopt levy each November for 1/1 effective date in next year
Utility Taxes on City Utilities	LMC Updated by Ordinance. Currently 6%. Each 1% generates \$400K per year	\$2,000,000	60 day notification period
Business License Base Fees	LMC Updated by Ordinance \$50,000-\$150,000 potential increase estimated	\$150,000	75 day notification to BLS required for any changes
Business License FTE fees	LMC Updated by Ordinance \$200,000-\$600,000 potential increase estimated	\$600,000	75 day notification to BLS required for any changes
Development Permit Fees	LMC Section Updated by Ordinance \$250,000-\$750,000 potential increase estimated	\$750,000	
Recreation Center Fees	Staff evaluating options for programmatic fee updates	\$200,000	
Transportation Benefit District Fees	Vehicle Tab Fees increase from \$40 to \$50 will bring in \$300K per year	\$150,000	Publish by 4/1/26 of notice to enact in 2026, 90 day petition period.

This list adds up to almost \$8 million in tax and fee increases:

- Another huge City Property Tax increase during the current mayor's 4 years equating to a total of 158% increase.
- Taxes you pay on City Utilities will go up 83%.
- Local businesses will be face added fees.
- This Mayor vetoed the City Council's attempt to end City Car Tab Fees. Now she wants to increase those Car Tab Fees by 25%.

**This is NOT Fiscal Responsibility! We cannot tax our way out of the largest deficit in Lynnwood's history.**

As your next Mayor this is my plan:

- Efficiency Audits:** Conduct audits to ensure city departments are implementing programs that truly benefit residents.
- Review of Personnel Costs:** Since wages and benefits account for more than 70% of general fund expenditures, it is essential to assess whether city departments are appropriately staffed.
- Expert Panel:** As a Council Member in my third term, I have never witnessed a deficit of this magnitude. I will convene a panel of municipal budget experts with practical experience in city budget creation to develop actionable recommendations for restoring Lynnwood's fiscal health.
- Community Input:** I will hold public meetings to make sure the priorities of Lynnwood residents are how we spend the taxes they pay.

It is time for a change in leadership at City Hall. Vote for George Hurst as your new Mayor of Lynnwood.

Paid for by ElectHurst4Lynnwood, 4027 184th PL SW, Lynnwood, Washington 98037



# PROTECT WHAT MATTERS, BUILD WHAT'S NEXT!

Lynnwood City Council Position 2 Candidate Ki Seung Cho—a highly respected internationally-ranked 9th Degree Black Belt Grand Master in World Taekwondo—is a Lynnwood business owner and community leader with over three decades of experience. As founder and head instructor of Master Cho's Taekwondo, he has guided countless students in martial arts while instilling values of respect, integrity and perseverance.

Ki Seung Cho is a prominent figure in Lynnwood and an active leader within the community. Known for his humility and generosity, he is continually involved in youth mentorship, civic engagement, and cultural initiatives. He played a key role in establishing the official Sister City partnership between Lynnwood and Damyang, South Korea, a vision that brought our city new opportunities for cultural exchange, friendship, and global connection.

Ki Seung Cho was appointed as president of the Korean Sports Association of Washington state and served as the director of the Taekwondo Association in Washingtons State. He was also the President of the Seattle Washington Korean Association.

His unwavering dedication to service has left a meaningful and lasting impact, making him not only a master of martial arts but also a role model and cornerstone of his community. Prior to immigrating to the United States to start his new life, Ki Seung Cho completed military service in the Army for Republic of Korea.

## POLICIES & PLATFORM

### PUBLIC SAFETY

Safety is of utmost importance to me. I want to work with police, schools, and local leaders to make our streets safer. I will continue to support education on violence prevention and more programs for our youth. I also believe we must give real resources as well as fair oversight to our police. I will work to start a community mental health center to help those in need and ease the pressure on emergency services.

### ECONOMIC GROWTH

I believe in smart, careful growth. I want to support responsible development near the Lynnwood Link light rail station. I back small businesses and affordable housing, and I want our community to be walkable and friendly. As someone who has run a family business, I understand how important it is to support local, minority, and family-owned shops. I also want to help make the Alderwood City Center a lively place for business, culture, and community life.

### FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Having run a small business for nearly thirty years, I know small business very well, and I believe in spending money wisely. I will bring a small business mindset to City Council with smart spending, clear goals, and an open budget. I want every dollar spent to meet real community needs. I support using tools like tax increment financing to pay for im-portant projects without putting extra burden on our working families.



**Victoria Woodards**  
Mayor of Tacoma



**Leonard Englund**  
Commissioner  
Lakehaven Water &  
Sewer District



**Lynnwood Police  
Guild**



**VOTE  
CHO**

ENDORSED  
ENDORSED  
ENDORSED

**LYNNWOOD  
CITY COUNCIL**



**Shannon Sessions**  
City of Lynnwood,  
former Council  
President

We are proud to endorse Ki Seung Cho, also known as Master Cho, for Lynnwood City Council. A beloved Taekwondo master, respected small business owner, and dedicated community leader, Master Cho has long been a pillar of the Korean-American community—one of the largest and most vibrant communities in Lynnwood.

It's time for our city leadership to include Master Cho who is the most qualified, prepared, and capable candidate for this seat. Join the Sessions family in supporting Ki Seung Cho this November 4th.

Ki Seung Cho is a man of integrity and humility whose selfless volunteerism for both the youth and elderly, played a key role in establishing the official Sister City partnership between Lynnwood and Damyang, South Korea.



**Julieta Altamirano**  
Crosby  
PUD  
Commissioner

Lynnwood needs stability, experience, and a candidate our kids can look up to. Ki Seung Cho is the clear choice for Position 2.



**Julie Kang, PhD**

It is with great respect and enthusiasm that I offer my full endorsement of Ki Seung Cho for Lynnwood City Council, Position 2. For over two decades, Mr. Cho has exemplified the true spirit of servant leadership, leading not for recognition or status, but out of a genuine commitment to the well-being of others and the betterment of our community.

Throughout his years of service, Mr. Cho has demonstrated a consistent dedication to listening first, understanding deeply, and acting thoughtfully. His leadership has always been rooted in collaboration, integrity, and compassion. These are the qualities that our city deeply needs as it continues to grow and diversify. Whether mentoring youth, supporting small businesses, or advocating for equitable access to city resources, Mr. Cho's actions have spoken louder than words.

As someone who leads by example, Master Cho brings both vision and humility to every table he joins. He has built bridges across communities, fostering trust and unity among people from all walks of life. His long record of civic involvement, volunteerism, and practical problem-solving makes him uniquely qualified to represent the residents of Lynnwood with wisdom, fairness, and heart.

I am confident that Mr. Cho will serve Lynnwood with the same dedication, empathy, and steadfast leadership he has shown in the Korean American community for more than twenty years. I wholeheartedly encourage voters of Lynnwood to support his candidacy for Lynnwood City Council, Position 2.



**Patrick Decker**  
Lynnwood City  
Councilman

During my years of service on the Lynnwood Planning Commission and the Lynnwood City Council, I've had the privilege of endorsing many candidates for public office. Yet rarely have I felt as honored and enthusiastic as I do in endorsing Ki Seung Cho to succeed me on the City Council when I retire this December.

I've known Master Cho for nearly 25 years. He is a man of deep integrity and unwavering honor. In all my years of public service, I've seldom met someone so consistently guided by conscience, principle, and moral clarity. Lynnwood will be fortunate to have a leader like him—one who brings fortitude, energy, and a steady hand, free of drama and scandal.

Master Cho's passion for Lynnwood is evident in everything he does. He listens deeply, especially to those whose voices are too often overlooked. He works tirelessly, and I have full confidence that he will approach every issue with thoughtfulness and dedication, always seeking the best path forward for our community. There is no better choice to fill my seat on the Council. Master Cho has my full and unwavering support.

Master Cho, a Korean American immigrant and educator, brings decades of leadership in public safety, youth mentorship, and economic development. My sons trained under him and gained discipline and respect—qualities too often missing in today's youth.

His candidacy is more than historic, it's a chance to elevate Lynnwood's future with a voice rooted in service, character, and community.



**Jason Moon**  
Mukilteo City  
Councilman

FOR POSITION 2 VOTE BY NOV 4TH

**KI SEUNG CHO**

website: <https://kiseungcho.com/>

425-444-5458

kiseungcho7@gmail.com

@Ki Seung Cho for Lynnwood City Council



"I am dedicated to promoting transparency, accountability, and collaborative leadership to ensure Lynnwood remains a safe and vibrant city for all residents.

"Lynnwood deserves leadership grounded in respect, kindness, and integrity—values I have embraced. Strength is more than physical ability; it comes from discipline, self-control, and a commitment to uplifting those around us.

These principles guide my approach to leadership.

"As a business owner for nearly 30 years, I've had the privilege of connecting with our diverse community. I want to bring this perspective to the Lynnwood City Council, fostering a safer environment for residents and supporting economic growth. A secure community strengthens local businesses, and I believe interest-based outreach programs for at-risk youth will help build a brighter future for all.

"Lynnwood is my home, and I am committed to serving its people. I would be honored to represent our community, working together to create a safer, stronger, and more connected future."





**Robert  
LEUTWYLER**  
LYNNWOOD



## Retain Veteran Leadership

- ✓ Solving Our Budget Crisis
- ✓ Public Safety
- ✓ Safer Streets & Sidewalks
- ✓ Growing Our Local Economy



THE DAILY  
**Herald**  
Editorial Board

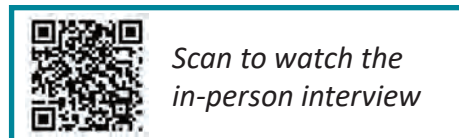
Endorsed By Your Police!

**CITY COUNCIL POSITION 5**

Paid for by the Committee to Elect Robert Leutwyler, PO Box 3343, Lynnwood WA 98046

# Lynnwood Times election interview: Robert Leutwyler

By KIENAN BRISCOE



Scan to watch the  
in-person interview

**LYNNWOOD**—With just over two weeks left until the November 4 General Elections, the Lynnwood Times invited Lynnwood CC candidate Robert Leutwyler back for another interview with a new set of questions on his platform and policies.

The Lynnwood Times also invited Leutwyler's opponent, Mpiima Mugambe to attend the interview process, but received no response.

Leutwyler was appointed to the City Council in March of this year. Prior to that, he had served on the Lynnwood Planning Commission. He says he is focused on restoring and building people's confidence in city government.

Leutwyler has been a Lynnwood resident since 2018. He has called the Puget Sound home since first being assigned to Joint Base Lewis-McChord in 2010. He served for five years as an Infantry Officer in the United States Army, deploying once to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

He currently works as a program manager for international projects and initiatives at a Seattle-based multinational company. He has a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of North Texas, and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Washington Foster School of Business. He also serves as Council Liaison for the Parks & Recreation Board.

In beginning our interview last Thursday, Leutwyler was first asked how he is qualified for the position of Lynnwood City Council member and what his top three priorities would be if elected.

For one, Leutwyler said, he has been doing the job since March. Prior to that he served on the Lynnwood Planning Commission since 2023, indicating that he has been engaged at the city level during times of significant policy changes and tackling some of the city's largest challenges, particularly the unified development code, the 20-year comprehensive plan update, working on addressing the city's budget shortfall.

Prior to his time on the council, Leutwyler served in the military. In the U.S. Army he led a platoon of 40 soldiers on a combat deployment in Afghanistan, and he currently works for a Fortune 100 company on international projects and initiatives.

"I think I bring a blend of private sector and public sector experience that qualifies me for the position," said Leutwyler.

In terms of his priorities, number one is the budget.

"We've got a \$20 million budget crisis that we're dealing with that demands

urgent action from the council. So that remains my top priority until we get the city back on stronger financial footing," said Leutwyler.

Second to managing the budget, Leutwyler is prioritizing housing affordability, which he says remains a crisis and major challenge for Lynnwood residents, as well as public safety.

"[Housing has] been a strong passion of mine during my time on the council, during my time on the planning commission, and as a resident advocating for changes to help us do more on that crisis. I want to see us continue making improvements there," said Leutwyler. "We've [also] got a police department dealing with significant staffing shortages. We've got a public health and mental health crisis that's afflicting our neighbors here in Lynnwood, our residents in need. That demands urgent action. It demands the focus of the council."

### Lynnwood's budget dilemma

According to Finance Director Michelle Meyer, the city of Lynnwood is facing a \$10.7 million budget deficit for the 2025 budget cycle. Leutwyler, during our interview, said the deficit could be as high as \$20 million.

With managing the budget being his top priority Leutwyler was asked how he plans on resolving the shortfall.

"I think it's important to remember those cuts that we made, what I've heard from directors and when I look at the cuts we've made, those are not sustainable long-term," said Leutwyler. "So those are steps we took to help address the immediate crisis of the 2025-2026 budget. But those are not cuts that I think are sustainable for Lynnwood moving forward... And now the question is, for the remaining \$9 to \$10 million, what do we do? Do we make more cuts? Do we provide revenue increases, some combination of the two?"

Leutwyler has made it a point to talk about this publicly as open as possible, also giving the department directors a chance to discuss the cuts they've made. He believes these cuts directly impact residents – especially considering some of the cuts are senior center programming and reduced services – so the public needs to be apart of the conversation.

To the point of the question, however, Leutwyler is proposing reducing the city's reserve fund from 2.5 months to two months, which he admitted would be a short-term fix but helps bridge the gap for the time being that could buy the city time.

For the long-term fix, Leutwyler wants to have more public outreach and discussions to hear directly from residents to ensure their input and which potential service cuts they would prioritize seeing.

### Restoring trust in local government

The city of Lynnwood, as you know, has been subject to various political scan-

dals involving city council members and controversies regarding hiring practices of various directors to Lynnwood departments. Leutwyler was then asked what he would do, as council member, to help restore the public's trust in city government.

"I think for myself and probably a lot of the Lynnwood community, they really don't understand how this type of behavior is allowed to go on," said Leutwyler. "Coming from the private sector, I look at the work that I do, and the policies we must follow, as a regular employee and just can't understand why this is allowed to go on. It's totally unacceptable."

Leutwyler believes that restoring trust in local government starts with a commitment to acting ethically and having open and transparent discussions.

"That's my commitment: acting ethically, acting in the best interest of the city and the residents rather than my own self-interests and doing what I can to promote an environment in the city council where we can have robust discussions, we can have uncomfortable discussions," said Leutwyler. "But what I've said before, an uncomfortable discussion doesn't have to be an unprofessional discussion."

### Youth Violence

Youth violence is an ongoing concern in Lynnwood with statistics showing an increase in juvenile case reports and arrests driven by factors such as gang activity, assaults and shootings.

Leutwyler was then asked what he would do to crackdown on the regional increase in youth violence.

As a start, he wants to continue holding conversations with the city council, with the police department, and with the school districts, to restore School Resource Officers or a similar program. At the same time, he continued, he can understand some of the concerns residents have with school resource officers. But it all starts with opening the conversation and figuring out what works best for everyone.

Leutwyler also wants to continue supporting counselors and support programs within school districts, to reach students early on and give them opportunities to build positive relationships and build a good network of friends and people they can trust to get them through challenging times.

"It's a very difficult climate right now, I think, politically, economically, looking at what are your prospects as you get out of school in terms of what kind of career can you hope to have? Will you ever be able to own a home? The impact of AI, I think there's just so many pressures that the younger generation is facing," said Leutwyler. "So I just want to give them a strong network as early on as possible, help them avoid some of those paths that they might end up going down that road that puts them into conflict with the police and gets them involved in gangs and some of these activities that are

preventable. We just need to be putting more resources in early on."

### Absorbing and preparing Lynnwood for growth

If Lynnwood is going to be successful in absorbing its projected growth, it's going to require some significant infrastructure improvements such as stormwater, wastewater, traffic, accessibility, etc. With federal and state support limited and the city currently in a budget crunch, Leutwyler was asked what innovative funding models he would propose to diversify revenue for the city to ensure it can meet its growth projections.

Leutwyler began by saying some of Lynnwood's growth will help the city pay for the types of infrastructure improvements it needs. Overall, he feels Lynnwood is on the right track in improving its financial ability to pay for all these obligations.

At the same time, he continued, Lynnwood has tremendous opportunities. For example, the City of Lynnwood has historically not properly funded road maintenance, he said, as well as its aging wastewater treatment facility resulting in abrupt rate increases.

In terms of innovative funding, Leutwyler supports the tax increment financing which the city is using for its city center area. What that does, Leutwyler continued, is provide a way for the city to invest in some infrastructure improvements but rather than simply paying for it with property tax increases, or some other tax, that will adversely impact residents, it takes the money from future businesses' success.

"We're taking the cost burden away from residents here today and we're putting it on the businesses that are going to come in, and they're going to do very well, and they're going to have a very successful business because of the investments we're making today," said Leutwyler.

### Possible annexation

Annexation is the process by which the city adds unincorporated areas of Snohomish County to the city's boundaries. Following annexation, properties receive public services such as police services, road maintenance, planning, and permitting from the city as opposed to Snohomish County in exchange for the city receiving additional tax revenues.

A perfect example of this is on July 12, 2025, the city of Mukilteo annexed commercial properties east of Mukilteo Speedway, adding some \$500,000 annually to the city's coffers.

Leutwyler was asked where he stands with Lynnwood potentially annexing nearby unincorporated land to expand its revenue stream.

Leutwyler responded by saying he wants to be extremely careful by weigh-

Continued PAGE 14



# FAA approves increase of 737 MAX production

EVERETT—Boeing on Friday, October 17, received approval from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to increase production of its 737 MAX jetliners to 42 aircraft per month, marking a significant step for the aerospace juggernaut following a production cap imposed by regulators following the Alaska Airlines Flight 1282 incident on January 5, 2024.

“I am encouraged to hear that Boeing is increasing production of the 737MAX after consistently meeting quality metrics set by the FAA, which will lead to more jobs for the women and men who design and make the best airplanes in the world,” Ranking member of the House Transportation Committee U.S.

Representative Rick Larsen (D-WA02) provided in a statement. “This is important progress toward Boeing getting back to its roots as an engineering company. The company’s leadership team must continue to work hard to earn back the trust of its customers and the flying public, and to create jobs for the best-trained, most-qualified aerospace workers in the world.”

The decision lifts the previous limit of 38 planes per month and signals progress in Boeing addressing safety and quality concerns.

Friday’s announcement comes just weeks after the FAA reinstated Boeing’s ability to issue airworthiness certificates

for select 737 MAX and 787 airplanes on a limited basis.

The FAA will continue its oversight of Boeing’s production processes.

“FAA safety inspectors conducted extensive reviews of Boeing’s production lines to ensure that this small production rate increase will be done safely,” the agency said in a statement.

The Alaska Airlines incident led to significant leadership changes, with Boeing’s President and CEO Dave Calhoun and BCA president stepping down, and Robert “Kelly” Ortberg appointed as CEO on August 8, 2024. The FAA also capped Boeing’s 737 MAX production

at 38 aircraft per month in January 2024.

On March 13, 2025, U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy toured Boeing’s Renton facility, emphasizing that production caps would remain until Boeing demonstrates sustained safety progress.

“My message to Boeing during our recent visit was one of tough love,” Secretary Duffy said during his visit. “Acting Administrator Chris Rocheleau and I have made clear that the FAA will continue to cap Boeing’s production of the 737 MAX until they can demonstrate sustainable progress on safety. Only then can they regain the trust of the American people.”

from page 1 **DIO BOUCSIEGUEZ**

cers.

## Preparing for growth

Boucsiequez was then asked how he would help the city prepare for growth, especially during a time of budget crises and when both state and federal resources are limited.

Boucsiequez said he would champion for annexing nearby unincorporated land to increase the borders and, by its extension, receive more tax dollars (particularly property tax) from more residents.

“What I would like to see happen is to workshop with the rest of my city council colleagues, when I get elected on the city council, to be able to come up with these ideas and ideas that ultimately will not hurt Lynnwood residents but ultimately benefit Lynnwood residents as a whole,” said Boucsiequez.

While not inherently against raising taxes, Boucsiequez would still walk a thin line of raising taxes to be 100% sure Lynnwood residents would gain more benefits from taxation rather than hindrance.

The areas that Boucsiequez would like to see annexed are Alderwood Manor and 164th.

## Housing

With rising housing prices, and a 52% property tax recently adopted by the City Council – which disproportionately impacts seniors and those living on a fixed income, Boucsiequez was asked how we would ensure Lynnwood remains a livable city while also attracting newcomers.

“I think we should definitely take a pause on increasing the property taxes more until we get that audit done, the aforementioned audit that I was talking about. Secondly, what I would like to see happen is maybe manufacture more homes,” said Boucsiequez. “Right now, Lynnwood is one of the, if not the most affordable city in South County. And I want to be able to keep it that way.”

Boucsiequez, a self-identified working-class man, shared that Lynnwood’s property taxes have hit him and his family hard.

While seniors and those living on a fixed income are adversely affected, it also impacts renters, Boucsiequez said, because it often drives up the cost of rent.

## Ethical development

Last week, Lynnwood greenlit a development agreement with PFD to actual-

ize its \$600 million vision to redevelop the downtown core, of which the city would be responsible for the construction of 194th and Ring Road.

Boucsiequez was asked how we would ensure contractors for current and future projects would pay their workers fairly and equitably. His solution would be to make sure the city hires local union workers.

“Because when you hire union, you have various safety laws that are put into place, right, to ensure that there’s a safe working environment and that workers are paid fairly. You might not necessarily get that outside of labor. But with labor, with unions, you do get those assurances that there will be a safe working environment for workers and that they will be paid fairly,” said Boucsiequez.

## Protecting Lynnwood’s parks and trails

Lynnwood is home to many parks and trails. Most recently completed parks projects being Scriber Lake Park Boardwalk Trail, which is now fully accessible, and Scriber Creek Trail Phase 2, which improved pedestrian access to the transit center and light rail station.

Boucsiequez was then asked what could be done to improve the city’s green spaces.

He replied that during his time door-belling, he consistently hears residents share that they want more connectivity between the city’s green spaces – such as a trail that leads from one to the next.

“I think that’s something that we can look at, because we do have some great parks, we do have some great green spaces here in Lynnwood,” said Boucsiequez.

## Closing remarks

To conclude our interview, Boucsiequez was granted the opportunity to address Lynnwood residents and share why he believes he deserves their vote.

He shared that firstly it should be telling that he attended the live interview and his opponent, current City Councilwoman Derica Escamilla, did not.

“I have lived in the city for 10 years. I love the city. I love Lynnwood. People oftentimes talk about Lynnwood in somewhat disparaging terms. I think of Lynnwood as a city with great opportunity, great opportunity for growth, great opportunity for diversification of businesses and experiences here in Lynnwood,” said Boucsiequez. “So I ask for your vote, Lynnwood residents. I ask for your vote because I love this city, and if you love your city, I think you’ll vote for me too. Thank you.”

from page 1 **LEAD THE WAY**

end of these eight weeks,” said Fortney. “There’s always hope and there’s always a path out of that but struggles, whether it’s in your family, out in the community, business struggles, work struggles, life is going to throw those to you and it’s okay to rely on other people.”

When the first round of youths complete their program on November 26, the Fortneys hope they have established some trust, and connection, with both youths and families.

“We don’t want to raise their kids, they’re their kids, we just want to be a resource for them,” said Fortney. “What I think kids can get out of this is, we have a lot of youths who are out there making mistakes and I’m one of them. But we want our kids to hear them [our guest speakers] talk, and say we don’t need to go down this path.”

Fortney shared with the Lynnwood Times he, too, made mistakes when he was younger. He grew up with a divorced family and essentially was on his own from the age of 15. Through these times he made a lot of good decisions (such as staying in school, grad-



Adam Fortney (left) at his and his wife, Jill’s, first official Lead the Way meeting on October 8. Photo Source: Adam Fortney.

uating, and joining the military) but he also made a lot of mistakes. These mistakes, he shared, has allowed him to meet kids where they are. Still, he admitted, him and Jill won’t always have all the answers but what they hope to accomplish is instilling in youth there’s “always a way out.”

The LEAD the Way program meets every Wednesday at the Sno-Isle Skills Tech Center from 5:30 to 7:30. For now the Fortneys plan to keep classes short (capped at 15) to ensure prop-

er, one-on-one, mentorship. As things grow in the future they could potentially also grow their class size, as well as implement more workshops (such as a career day, a resource day, and so on).

While the program is open to ages 13-17 Fortney added 12-year olds can also enroll on a case-by-case basis.

The Fortney’s program tends to attract troubled youth but it’s open to any youths who may feel like they can get something from the program’s lessons

and leadership.

“I feel like there’s a void with our youth today and I don’t mean that with any judgement whatsoever, I just mean I think the youth sometimes need to be pointed in the right direction, if you will, a little bit of leadership, and sometimes a little bit of encouragement and they can sometimes get on a much better path than what they are currently on,” said Fortney.

The Fortneys ultimate vision for their nonprofit is to develop a relationship with youths, and their families, and continue to support them through helping out with extracurricular activity costs once the nonprofit has the resources.

The LEAD the Way program also hopes to expand its staff through volunteerism but wants to be extremely careful who they bring around youth, Fortney added, so aren’t quite at that stage yet.

Those who are interested in joining the Fortney family’s LEAD the Way program can reach via email at: [theadthewayfoundation25@gmail.com](mailto:theadthewayfoundation25@gmail.com)



from page 3 **OWINGS**

### Absorbing and preparing Lynnwood for growth

If Lynnwood is going to be successful in absorbing its projected growth, it's going to require some significant infrastructure improvements including traffic accessibility, and wastewater/stormwater improvements.

With federal and state support limited and the city currently in a budget crunch, Owings was asked what innovative funding models he would propose to diversify revenue for the city to ensure it can meet its growth projections.

Owings cycled back on what he said before concerning park sponsorships and potential advertisements in park restrooms, adding that the city could run a promotion to bolster out its adopt-a-road program.

Owings was also cautious about raising sales tax noting that when cities raise their sales tax it discourages people from shopping there, potentially being counterproductive. He wondered if rolling back Lynnwood's sales tax, despite it being its primary money maker, would actually attract more shoppers and, in turn, generate more revenue.

Annexation, according to Owings, could also be another way the city could generate more funds.

Annexation is the process by which the city adds unincorporated areas of Snohomish County to the city's boundaries. Following annexation, properties receive public services such as police services, road maintenance, planning, and permitting from the city, as opposed to the Snohomish County exchange for a city receiving additional tax revenues. Most recently, as an example, on July 12, 2025, the city of Mukilteo annexed commercial properties east of Mukilteo Speedway, adding some \$500,000 annually to the city's coffers.

Some potential areas of annexation, according to Owings, could be the area north of Walmart and Martha Lake. Still, Owings added, he would want to

do his due diligence to ensure the city could handle an annex as far as delivery of services go.

### Housing

Housing, rental and ownership are very expensive in the Snohomish County region, especially with seniors because they're on a fixed income, disproportionately impacted by property tax increases.

Owings was asked how he would make Lynnwood more affordable for those living on a fixed incomes, excluding housing and zoning codes.

Owings prefaced his answer by stating he is not entirely against taxes, believing them to do a lot of good for a lot of people. However, he continued, the city needs to be mindful of how tax increases adversely affect vulnerable communities – particularly seniors.

"I'd also like to see some sort of incentivization to build cottage-style properties where they're a little more affordable for people that don't need a big house anymore," said Owings. "It's kind of similar to, like, RV parks, but they would actually be a fixed structure."

### Managing ethical development

Last week, on Monday, the city of Lynnwood greenlit a development agreement with the PFD to actualize its \$600 million vision to redevelop the downtown core, which the city would be responsible for the construction of 194th and Ring Road.

Owings was asked how we would ensure these development projects pay their workers ethically and adhere to state and federal labor laws.

"Well, for one, we need a project labor agreement on that," said Owings. "We've got workers that are being exploited in Lynnwood right now that it just kind of gets brushed under the rug."

Owings continued that, as a carpenter and union member himself, he has a background in fighting for the work-

ing class and will continue to fight for blue-collar workers being paid a fair, and livable, wage. How we can do that as a council member, he continued, is ensure the city enters project labor agreements for large capital projects.

"It may look like it costs more on paper because usually the bid that's put out by those companies will be a little bit higher, sure, especially with prevailing wage, things like that. But if you look statistically, they actually end up being a lower budget than a project that's gone without any sort of project labor agreement on it. And they tend to be safer," said Owings.

With project labor agreements, continued Owings, it also ensures that the work stays within the city, instead of sourcing labor in from surrounding areas, which stimulates the local economy.

"[But it] also gives you a sense of pride," said Owings. "For me personally, I worked on the light rail project. I've worked on Spruce Elementary. I did a little bit of work on Edmonds College. And I drive by those projects all the time and point at it with my kids. If we can get the community building community projects, I think it's better than bringing outside labor."

### Protecting Lynnwood's parks and trails

Lynnwood is home to many parks and trails. Most recently completed parks projects include the Scriber Lake Boardwalk Trail, which is now fully accessible, and the Scriber Creek Trail Phase 2, which improved pedestrian access to the transit center and light rail stations.

Owings was asked what he would like to see continued being done to preserve, and enhance, Lynnwood's green spaces.

"Some things I've heard while door knocking is certain parks don't have as many activities as other parks," said Owings. "You go to like Lyndale Park and there's quite a bit of different things you can do there. But then you go to, like, North Lynnwood Park and there's a good playground, there's a big field. But, other than like the basketball

courts, the field, there's not as much there."

In addition to adding more activities in more parks Owings would like to see "mini parks", or green spaces, in condensed urban areas. These would be small in comparison to actual parks but still offer an opportunity to escape from an urban environment for a little bit, relax, reflect, and by extension take care of their mental health.

"I think it's better for people's mental health if they're able to touch grass and look at trees more often," said Owings. "With our budget the way that it is, these are more pipe dreams, right? But eventually, like I said, if we can get some of that ad revenue from park sponsorships after the budget's figured out, we can continue that revenue to expand on our parks."

### Closing comments

Concluding our interview, we gave Owings the opportunity to address his voters and explain why, according to him, he deserves the residents of Lynnwood's vote.

Owings said he was born and raised in Lynnwood, and he has a passion for it, so much so that he's chosen to start his family in Lynnwood despite its rapidly increasing cost of living.

"Growing up here, I understand the identity of Lynnwood. And I think that we need to maintain that identity while we're still growing, but not lose ourselves, in the process," said Owings. "Lynnwood's always been a blue-collar working-class city, and I think that we need to maintain that blue-collar working-class city and not try to grow too big, too quick."

Owings continued that he brings a lot of lived experience to the position, having suffered from addiction, mental health, and homelessness. Through that lived experience, he continued, he can bring a fresh perspective to help Lynnwood tackle its homelessness, substance abuse, and mental health crises with new ideas the city has yet to explore.

from page 2 **COMMUNITY TRANSIT**

- Community outreach efforts, such as how-to-ride events for seniors and youth in partnership with organizations like the YMCA and Sno-Isle Libraries.
- Launch of new Lost-&-Found software and construction of comfort stations for drivers.
- Transition of contracted bus services to direct operations at the Kasch Park Operating Base.
- Completion of annual financial audits and the Federal Transit Administration's triennial audit with no findings.
- Expansion of customer research through regular surveys on safety, schedules, and service quality.

These efforts contributed to increased ridership and operational efficiency, setting the stage for further growth in the coming years.

### 2026-27 Budget Summary

The 2026-2027 budget is balanced, with operating revenues projected to exceed expenditures in both years, ensuring fully funded reserves and alignment with the six-year Transit Development Plan. For 2026, operating revenues are budgeted at \$282.1 million, with operating

expenditures at \$277.2 million. The 2027 figures show operating revenues of \$290.3 million and expenditures of \$282.9 million.

Capital investments, which cover major projects like fleet expansions and facility upgrades, total \$167.5 million in 2026 and \$110.9 million in 2027. Interfund transfers from the general fund—\$76.8 million in 2026 and \$45.4 million in 2027—will support capital projects, reserves, workers' compensation, and debt service.

Overall, the biennial plan allocates resources for an 8% service increase in 2026 and a 3% increase in 2027 across all modes (excluding Sound Transit Express Bus service). This includes adding over 130,000 service hours, expanding innovative services like Zip Shuttles and a DART paratransit pilot, and advancing Swift BRT network projects. Other priorities include hiring 14 new Transit Security Officers for 24/7 coverage, installing driver barrier doors on all coaches, and progressing zero-emission initiatives with an order for 10 battery electric buses.

The budget also funds the completion of the shift to in-house bus operations, adding 138 full-time equivalent positions, and supports facilities improve-

ments under the agency's master plan. Communications and marketing efforts will promote new services, Swift expansions, and regional events like the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

In 2026, Community Transit will celebrate its 50th anniversary, with planned community partnerships reflected in the budget to mark the milestone.

### COMPARISON TO PREVIOUS BUDGET

Compared to the 2025 adopted budget, the proposed 2026 figures show growth in operating expenditures, rising from \$248.6 million in 2025 to \$277.2 million—an increase of approximately 11.5% (\$28.6 million). This uptick supports service expansions and the in-house operations transition. Operating revenues also edge up slightly, from \$278.1 million in 2025 to \$282.1 million in 2026.

Capital spending, however, decreases from \$205.6 million in 2025 to \$167.5 million in 2026, a drop of about 18.5% (\$38.1 million), reflecting a shift in project phasing. The 2027 capital budget further declines to \$110.9 million.

### SECURITY IMPROVEMENTS

Customer and employee safety are

strong features in the 2026-27 budget. Community Transit will continue to expand its transit security staffing by adding 14 new Transit Security Officers (TSO's) to its staff of 34 TSO's, allowing for 24/7 staffing of the agency's Security Operations Center. The two-year budget also includes funding for installation of driver barrier doors in all Community Transit coaches, which will begin later this year.

The agency will launch in initiative to improve bus stop design and amenities throughout the service area, providing better safety and convenience for customers. Other safety projects include an upgraded CAD-RMS system for dispatching security personnel, as well as improved scaffolding and fall protection systems and replacement of bus lifts in the maintenance shop. This budget also funds amenities for coach operators at park and rides.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

Community Transit provides bus and paratransit service, vanpool, and innovative transit options in Snohomish County. The agency continues to expand its Swift bus rapid transit network to connect people to light rail and provide fast, frequent service throughout the county.



# Lynnwood Council VP Binda appears to have falsely claimed college degree in official voter pamphlet

LYNNWOOD—Lynnwood Council Vice President Joshua Binda appears to have falsely claimed in the Snohomish County Voter's Pamphlet (p. 73) that he graduated from Western Governors University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management. Further, no enrollment records for Joshua Binda were found to confirm that he ever attended the University of Washington as he claims in his profile on the City of Lynnwood web page along to several media outlets.

Western Governors University (WGU) is a private, nonprofit online university founded in 1997 by a group of U.S. governors to provide accessible, competency-based education. The university is headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah, and offers 60 accredited bachelor's and master's degree programs in fields like business, IT, education, and healthcare. WGU serves over 150,000 students, primarily working adults, and is recognized for its flexibility and career-focused approach.

According to verified documents provided to the Lynnwood Times, Lynnwood Council Vice President Josh Binda enrolled at Western Governors University (WGU) for June 2025 and is projected to graduate from the institution in 2027 and does not currently hold a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management from WGU.

In an interview with the Everett Herald Binda admitted that he does not currently hold a college degree.

Binda also claimed to be currently "attending the university of Washington where he is majoring Business Management and minoring in Political Science" on the City's website for years 2023, 2024, and as of October 7, 2025. However, according to Victor Balta, Media Contact for the University of Washington, a review of the student database (which Balta confirmed shows alumni as well as of the end of December 2024) shows no student having attended the University of Washington under Binda's name.

A second source of verified documents provided to the Lynnwood Times also show no enrollment history for Binda ever attending the University of Washington.

Binda claimed to be a practicing Real Estate Agent for John L. Scott however the Lynnwood Times confirmed that his real estate license is inactive and therefore he cannot practice in the State of Washington. There is no record of Binda ever selling a home in Washington state.

Binda claimed that he worked as an integration engineer for Jeff Bezos' rocket company Blue Origin. A 2023 court document for wage garnishment confirmed that his last day of employment with Blue Origin was on July 15, 2022. Two independent sources familiar with Blue Origin's Integration Engineer job title shared that the position does not require a college degree only a high school diploma or equivalent. The Lynnwood Times is currently awaiting confirmation from Blue Origin concerning Binda's employment and in



**Josh Binda**  
(Nonpartisan)

**Contact**  
(425) 232-8945  
Cmjoshbinda.mgmt@gmail.com  
Joshbindaforall.com

#### Elected Experience

Lynnwood City Councilmember (2021-Present); Current Lynnwood City Council Vice President; PCO of the 32nd LD Democrats

#### Other Professional Experience

Integration Engineer Tech, Amazon; Integration Engineer 2, Blue Origin; Founder, Josh Binda Speaks LLC; Self Published Author; 425 Business Magazine 30 Under 30

#### Education

Bachelor of Science in Business Management from WGU; Aerospace Engineering Certification from Sno-Isle Tech

Binda graduated from Kamiak High school and attended Sno-Isle tech where he got his aerospace engineering certification. He was the student body president both years he was there. Josh currently is attending the university of Washington where he is majoring in Business Management and minoring in Political Science. He has work experience as an integration engineer for Jeff Bezos rocket company called Blue Origin and as a Real Estate agent for John L Scott. He is excited to be a part of the council and represent all residents in Lynnwood.

what capacity.

The 425 Business Magazine – who named Binda their 30 under 30 in 2022 – and King 5 both have previously reported that Binda has "made his living as real estate agent and as an engineer for Blue Origin."

Binda claimed that he attended Sno-Isle Tech where he attained his aerospace engineering certification and that he was the student body president both years he was there.

Back in February 2025, Diane Bradford, Communications Director for the Mukilteo School District, did confirm with the Lynnwood Times that Binda attended Kamiak High School, where he graduated from in 2017 and took classes at Sno-Isle TECH. However, Bradford was unable to confirm what certification he was awarded by Sno-Isle nor was she able to divulge his involvement with the student body at Sno-Isle TECH as their database does not indicate that information, according to her.

Separate from Bradford's response, the Mukilteo School District did confirm, a year earlier, that no one by the name of Josh Binda was ever student body president nor in student government at Kamiak High School. The Lynnwood Times is still awaiting confirmation of Binda's involvement with Sno-Isle TECH's Associated Student Body.

All other Lynnwood City Council candidates' education background checks did not reveal any inconsistencies with claims in their voter pamphlet statements.

In Washington state, including Snohomish County, candidates submit statements to the local Voters' Pamphlet voluntarily, and elections offices (like Snohomish County's) do not fact-check or edit content for accuracy—only for compliance with formatting

and ethical guidelines (e.g., no obscenity or defamation). However, knowingly providing false information, such as fabricating educational credentials, could trigger both civil and criminal penalties under state election and campaign finance laws.

#### The Snohomish County Voter's Pamphlet

The Snohomish County Voter's Pamphlet is a nonpartisan resource published by the Snohomish County Elections Office to help voters make informed decisions during elections. It serves as an official guide for local primaries, general elections, and countywide special elections in Snohomish County. The pamphlet included candidate statements, ballot measures, and key voting information such as ballot drop box locations (35+ sites open 24/7), deadlines, and accessibility options.

Snohomish County Voter's Pamphlet is mailed to every household in Snohomish County for primaries, general elections, and countywide specials—reaching approximately 470,000 registered households.

Governed by Snohomish County Code Chapter 2.49, the pamphlet ensures transparency. Candidates must file a Declaration of Candidacy with the county and Public Disclosure Commission, and they can opt to submit statements (up to 200 words) and photos by the end of May for November general elections.

#### A Chronicle of Evictions, Alleged Lies, and Ethical Failures

Lynnwood City Council Vice President Josh Binda has faced a barrage of controversies that raise serious questions about his integrity, eligibility, and fitness for office. Most notably, an in-depth investigation revealed he was evicted from his Lynnwood apart-

Western Governors University was unable to locate a degree for Joshua. However, Dates of Attendance for Joshua were verified.

#### Dates of attendance

Student name	Joshua Binda
Institution	Western Governors University 03339400
School code	033394
School branch code	00
Major	Bachelor Of Science, Business Management
Dates of attendance	06/01/2025 - 11/30/2025

Projected graduation date 05/31/2027

#### Enrollment history

Status	Term	Certified
Full-time	06/01/2025 - 11/30/2025	09/22/2025

**NO RECORDS WERE FOUND**

ment in November 2023 after failing to pay six months of rent—totaling over \$10,300 still owed as of early 2025—and was allegedly been residing in Everett until February 2025, rendering his voter registration inactive and potentially disqualifying him from holding office under state law, which requires continuous residency.

On June 27, 2023, Snohomish County Superior Court Judge Marybeth Dingley ruled that Lynnwood City Council Vice President Josh Binda was eligible for a recall, finding sufficient evidence for four of the five charges of misfeasance, malfeasance, and violation of oath of office.

Binda's pattern of ethical lapses includes misusing \$2,913 in campaign funds for personal expenses like Versace clothing and dental work, resulting in PDC fines he initially claimed inability to pay due to not knowing how to write a check; violating city ethics rules by filming a promotional video for his paid speaking tour in council chambers;

Critics, including residents and fellow council members, decry his unprofessional conduct, such as a shirtless Instagram post promoting his paid speaking gigs to middle schoolers which included a post telling them to "Tattoo my name so I know its real" on their bodies.

Following an October 10, 2025, Hearing with the Washington Disclosure Commission (PDC) for alleged violation of RCW 42.17A.235 and RCW 42.17A.240 for failure to timely and accurately report campaign contributions and campaign expenditures, and WAC 390-16-043 for failing to timely provide inspection of his campaign books in the 2025 Primary Election, the agency announced that they have officially launched an official "Investigation of Possible Violation" against the embattled councilman.



from page 7 **GEORGE HURST**

up discussions and ensure directors can ask questions.

“There’s not going to be these silos that are out there, and there’s not going to be a fear of a mayor who will react negatively towards somebody,” said Hurst.

### Youth violence

Pivoting towards youth violence, which is an ongoing issue for Lynnwood with statistics showing an increase in juvenile case reports and arrests driven by factors such as gang activity, assaults, and shootings, Hurst said he wants to address the root causes.

Hurst said it starts with a healthy home environment. With 15% of Lynnwood residents at or below the poverty level, Hurst wants to put policies in place that will increase the household incomes of those living in the city. With talks of increasing the minimum wage, Hurst said he’d want to tread carefully on that issue and ensure the proper studies were in place to ensure it was feasible.

Another way, Hurst continued, is to have more well-paying jobs in Lynnwood with good benefit packages. That’s why he’s been pushing to get project labor agreements and community workforce agreements on city projects which would draw from the city’s residents for employment.

“The current mayor expressed that, well, there’s not enough workers here. There’s 300 union carpenters in Lynnwood...So I think it is a possibility,” said Hurst.

### Preparing for growth, innovating revenue

With Lynnwood’s Link light rail station now open, and its projected growth to top 65 million by 2044 (Lynnwood’s population has been growing at a rate of 3.88% since 2020), the city will need to carefully manage itself

to properly absorb, and prepare, for that growth. Just some necessary improvements include traffic congestion management, stormwater/wastewater improvements, and accessibility, with all this obviously costing money. Hurst was asked what kinds of innovative funding models he would propose to diversify revenue for the city to ensure it could meet its growth projections.

Hurst said that Lynnwood, already, has a far more diverse revenue model compared to other cities in the area – with sales tax being its most reliable (compared to property taxes in other cities), red light cameras bringing in approximately \$4 to \$5 million a year, and property tax falling in fourth.

However, the problem is, according to Hurst, that Lynnwood has a lot of projects that are going to cost a lot of money – one of those being replacing its outdated wastewater treatment plant, a projected \$260 million project.

“We can’t do that on our own. We’re going to have to rely on federal funds and state funds. The treatment plant does dump into Puget Sound, so I hope the state will come forward with some funds. But it’s the EPA, the feds, who have fined us for some of the high nutrient levels that go out of our wastewater treatment plant,” said Hurst. “I know the atmosphere is not very conducive in D.C. for getting funding, especially for states that are, quote, blue. But I think our congresspeople have the power and have the committee chairmanships that we should be able to get some funding.”

When Hurst was asked about possibly annexing nearby, currently unincorporated, land, to generate more funds he said he would tread carefully and really study whether the city could support an annex by accurately, and efficiently, delivering services such as first response.

### Housing

people pay or some of the taxes that they pay,” said Leutwyler. “I want to make sure people who are eligible for those financial aid and the financial assistance programs know about them and are able to take advantage of them.”

Leutwyler, during his time on council, has also done a lot of work with the state and private management companies to lessen the risk that some of Lynnwood’s seniors are facing.

“When I talk about affordability and I talk about housing, it’s important to recognize transportation is usually the second biggest portion of someone’s household budget, second to housing. And it’s around 25% for a lot of households,” said Leutwyler. “So when I think about how do we make Lynnwood more affordable for everyone, but particularly seniors, I think about what can we do to make sure that they’ve got access to all the services and all the things that they need in the city, but maybe not needing a car, or maybe instead of two cars, they downsize to one car.”

### Ensuring equitable workers’ pay

Last week the Lynnwood City Council greenlit a development agreement with the PFD to actualize a \$600 million vision to redevelop the downtown core, of which the city would be responsible for the construction of 194th and Ring Road.

Leutwyler was asked how he would

Regarding housing, with Lynnwood recently passing a 52% property tax increase which disproportionately impacts seniors and those living on fixed incomes, Hurst was asked what would be done to ensure Lynnwood remains a livable, and attractive, city.

Hurst answered that he has already begun working on that issue by partnering with his wife Pam Hurst, Legislative Lead for Washington Low Income Housing Alliance, and with Manufactured Homeowners, fighting for those living in manufactured home communities who are being priced out by corporate investors who are buying up their plot of land and charging premiums. The two have testified at both the House and Senate Housing Committees for the Rent Stabilization bill (HB1217, signed into law back in May) which offers protection for manufactured home owners.

“The city needs to, again, look at the housing action plan, and ask for more protections for renters and such. And I think that’s what we need to continue to look at, maybe a rental inspection. There are all kinds of things that we can do,” said Hurst.

From sitting on the Finance Committee Hurst has witnessed, firsthand, already the good work done by the Human Services Coordinator and Kyle Ward, with the Snohomish PUD, in helping seniors qualify for utility rebates.

### Responsible development

Last week the City of Lynnwood greenlit a development agreement with the PFD (Public Facilities District) to actualize its \$600 million vision to redevelop the downtown core, of which the city would be responsible for the construction of 194th and Ring Road. Hurst was asked what he would do, as Mayor, to ensure the contractors in this development agreement are paying their workers a fair wage and adhering to state and federal labor standards.

ensure contractors in this development agreement are paying their workers a fair wage and adhering to state and federal labor standards.

Leutwyler would like to see project labor development agreements that would directly benefit Lynnwood residents.

“Project labor agreements are a way to help enforce the right working conditions, the right labor standards that people deserve, the right wages, good wages, making sure that contractors are operating above board and they’re not operating, working with subcontractors that aren’t following all of the labor laws,” said Leutwyler. “That type of framework, I think, needs to be built into any large project that the city does.”

### Improving Lynnwood’s green spaces

Lynnwood is home to many parks and trails. Most recently completed parks projects include the Scriber Lake Boardwalk trail, which is now fully accessible, and the Scriber Creek Trail Phase 2, which improved pedestrian access to the transit center light rail station.

Leutwyler was asked how, in addition to these, the city could improve its green spaces.

Leutwyler would like to see the city set up a park district in Lynnwood which, he said, could be an additional revenue stream and a powerful tool that would give residents a clearer idea of where

Hurst replied that he would like to see the City of Lynnwood have a wage theft ordinance that would make sure employees are being paid fairly or paid at all. He also wants to make sure that every contract is a responsible bidder and meets certain requirements.

Lastly, Hurst wants to push project labor agreements or community work agreements.

### Green spaces

Hurst was then asked about Lynnwood’s parks and trails and how he would go about improving the city’s green spaces.

Despite being in a budget crises, Hurst wants to ensure the city’s Parks Department is properly funded.

“We do have some green spaces that haven’t even been developed. And, just recently, we approved to hire a consultant for Row Park, which in 2004 was listed as a park that was going to be in the capital improvement plan, but it never happened,” said Hurst. “So we need to be aware, first of all, where the open spaces are, that we own but have not created a park out of yet.”

### Closing statement

Concluding our interview, the Lynnwood Times awarded Hurst the opportunity to address Lynnwood voters on why he believes to be the best pick as Mayor.

“I think I would appeal to the voters of Lynnwood because I’ve proven that I’m the one that is willing to do the work to solve the [budget] crisis,” said Hurst. “My vision for this city is to have housing that’s not only affordable but attainable and to have a safe city and really a city that’s going to be able to grow. We’re going to have density in the city center. Neighborhoods are going to be neighborhoods. So, I just would appreciate, and ask for, your vote. Thank you.”

from page 10 **ROBERT LEUTWYLER**

ing how much more the city would be taking in, alongside what the cost burden would be for expanding services to these regions.

“What you find in a lot of cases, when you annex an area, you may get a very short-term influx of cash, but you’ve taken on this perpetual obligation of their roads and their infrastructure, and when you look at the two, you’ve annexed an area that now costs you more than you’re ever going to get back from a tax revenue standpoint,” said Leutwyler. “So it’s very important to analyze all of these areas and make an informed decision and not simply annex something as a band-aid solution, because that’s not in the right interest of Lynnwood residents in the long term.”

### Housing affordability

With a recent 52% increase on property taxes, which disproportionately impacts seniors and those living on a fixed income, Leutwyler was then asked how he would make Lynnwood a more affordable place to live for seniors and low-income individuals.

“I think it’s important to acknowledge that housing and zoning are significant reasons why housing is so expensive. That being said, we do have programs that help provide financial assistance and reduce some of that financial hardship when it comes to the utilities that

their tax dollars are going.

“I think we all recognize the importance of green spaces and parks, and they’re under threat right now with the budget crisis. The park district is an idea that I want to see us explore in the long term,” said Leutwyler. “The budget should be our focus short-term, but for the long term, as we try to put better systems in place, the park district, I think, is a good idea that makes sense from a resident standpoint and then it also empowers our parks and rec department to start making the investments that we need to make.”

### Closing statements

Leutwyler was then given the opportunity to address voters in Lynnwood and share why, he believes he is the best candidate for the position.

“The reason I’m running to retain my seat, the challenges we’ve talked about here with housing, with our budget, the tax situation, the tax burden on residents, public safety, these are all issues that got me inspired to get involved in city government five years ago as a resident. It’s what got me involved on the planning commission. And again, it’s why I’m running to retain my seat to solve these challenges that we’re facing,” said Leutwyler. “I’m in it for the long term. I’m focused on making what I believe are the best decisions in your interests and I hope to earn your vote in November.”



# Sound Transit has no plans to add parking to Lynnwood light rail following Mariners playoff parking surge

LYNNWOOD—In the wake of a Mariners playoff-induced parking surge at Lynnwood's City center light rail station earlier this month, Sound Transit has no plans to add additional parking to the station citing that evening's abnormal parking volume, Lynnwood's current zoning codes, and available alternative parking options as the reason.

The transportation authority, instead, recommends commuters park in the nearby Ash Way and Swamp Creek park-n-rides, or explore parking at other stations such as Mountlake Terrace in instances in which the parking garage is at capacity.

Monica Spain, Public Relations for Community Transit, added that Community Transit provides frequent service from the park and rides mentioned below to Lynnwood City Center Station so people can catch light rail.

"Swift Orange Line runs between Edmonds College in Lynnwood and McCollum Park Park & Ride in Mill Creek. It connects with Swift Blue Line at Highway 99 & 196th Street in Lynnwood and shares stations with Swift Green Line on Bothell-Everett Highway in Mill Creek," said Spain. "If you are within the Alderwood Zip Shuttle zone, that is an option to get to Lynnwood City Center too. Same cost as a bus ride."

Spain added that people still need to be mindful that service doesn't run late at night (with the last bus running at 1 a.m.), so they may need to make alternate plans for their ride home from the station.

## The October 15 Mariners mass towing fiasco

Scores of people, already forlorn by a devastating Mariners loss against the Blue Jays on Wednesday, October 15, returned to the Lynnwood light rail station after the game to find their vehicles missing. A quick call to a nearby towing lot would tell them why.

The Seattle Mariners had just returned home after securing two back-to-back wins against the Blue Jays in their home city of Toronto, suffering a 13-4 loss to their momentum that evening. It was game three of a seven game series with both American League teams squaring off for a shot at the World Series, of which the Mariners has never been to.

But to make matters worse, dozens of drivers who had parked at a seemingly vacant lot adjacent to the new Lynnwood City Center light rail station had their vehicles towed while attending the already disappointing (and expensive) playoff game.

The incident unfolded as the 1,900-space park-and-ride garage at the station reached capacity, prompting fans to seek alternative parking spots across the street. What appeared to be an open lot turned out to be private property, leading to the overnight removal of 45 vehicles by Mary's Towing, a local company contracted by the landowner, and costing owners up to \$600 in fees. Ticket prices for that Wednesday's game, alone, ranged from \$200 to several thousand.

That Wednesday was unique, Sound Transit said, for a couple of reasons. For one the Mariners postseason game drew crowds of nearly 50,000, according to T-Mobile Park's attendance records, with many attendees relying on public transportation (such as light rail) to alleviate the headache of traffic and parking in downtown Seattle. According to a Reddit user parking near the stadiums that night ranged from \$120 to \$400 for the evening.

The second reason was the game started at 5:00 p.m., meaning Mariners fans had to park and secure a spot on a train hours before the typical midweek 9-5ers returned from work, leaving their vehicles occupying a parking space.

It's a phenomenon Sound Transit considers a "parking surge," which is a rare occurrence not warranting additional infrastructure, especially considering most surrounding parcels in Lynnwood's City Center are currently zoned for development leaving few options to build additional parking, and the future Everett light rail extension is expected to loosen the grip on Lynnwood's parking restrictions long term.

Though the City of Lynnwood does not currently allow paid parking near the light rail station that could also be an option under a special use permit, though this is something Sound Transit is still exploring.

On the evening of October 15, Mary's Towing was summoned by the property owner to clear the site of the 45 motorists who had parked illegally on private property. Towing fees, which align with Washington state regulations, averaged around \$400 per vehicle. Some affected drivers reported paying up to \$650 to retrieve their vehicles, that included additional storage and release costs.

The plot of land where these motorists parked was a concrete foundation of a once existing strip mall, now torn down to make way for the future development of Northline Village, according to Snohomish County records. The property had a fence, erosion control barriers delineating the property's boundaries, and no parking signs in place by Mary's Towing. The fence had been knocked down, King 5, who originally broke the story, reported with many motorists claiming there were no signs indicating they could not park there.

"I can't believe that people would just park on a foundation when there's gravel and whatever is coming up out of the concrete, you know, from a building that was torn down. Common sense, they know that they're not in a parking lot," said Mary of Mary's Towing. "We always make sure that our signage is properly posted so that people are aware, you know, the minute they enter the property that, hey, you know, you need to look at the sign and watch where you park."

## What did those affected have to say?

One Mariners fan, Dana, had gotten tickets to the October 15 baseball game against the Blue Jays and was recommended, by her father, to take the light rail down to Seattle. He said, according to Dana, that parking can fill up fast though but if it does there would be

an abandoned lot across the street she could use.

She got to the Lynnwood light rail station around 3:15 p.m. to make sure she, and her husband, had plenty of time to get to the stadium in Seattle by first pitch. When they got there, the lot was full and the two spent a good 20 minutes, she said, circling around looking for parking.

"So then we drove across and parked with probably about 25 other cars at that point, I would say. So it's about 3.30. Went across the street, hopped on the light rail, and went to the game," said Dana.

When the two returned to their car after the game she informed the Lynnwood Times the lot was nearly empty, maybe 10 cars, and a "parking lot attendant" passing out cards for Mary's Towing and telling them their car had been towed. She assumed this person was the property owner.

"I had to call my parents to come get us to drive us to the tow yard. There were quite a few Mariners fans there picking up their cars. So all said and done, we could be looking at 75-ish cars by October," said Dana.

Dana's towing bill was more than \$600. She could have avoided a \$150 towing fee if she had waited until the next day, she said, but she needed her vehicle that

night to take her daughter to school the next day.

Destiny, another impacted driver who had attended a concert rather than the baseball game, expressed frustration upon discovering her vehicle missing. "I'm pretty pissed! I've never had my car towed there before," she said.

Mark, another driver caught in the sweep, described his surprise at the lack of clear warnings. "I was shocked. I thought at least there would be a sign," he added.

Ownership of the parcel traces back to MGP XI US Properties, LLC, a San Francisco-based real estate firm that purchased it in 2016 for \$41 million from Alderwood Plaza LLC. County records further show that MGP XI US Properties has assembled a larger portfolio in the area, acquiring all adjacent parcels between 44th Avenue West and 46th Avenue West along 200th Street Southwest—excluding the Shell gas station—for a total of \$56.5 million.

According to the Lynnwood Police Department, who received several calls that evening presumably from people who thought the towing was them, said no arrests were made that evening. The LPD posted on social media that evening warning people to not park on private property.

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from page 1 ENSO

, two-, and three-bedroom units) at market value, 397 parking spaces, and 4,235 square feet of commercial space on its ground floor.

Seven months later, in June 2024, the property used for the project was purchased by ACG for a total of \$9.5 million, which brought the total investment of the Bellevue-based commercial real estate agency to a whopping \$11.5 million.

The Multi-Family Housing Property Tax Exemption (MFTE) program began in 1995, codified as RCW 84.14, to incentivize residential development in urban centers, designated as “residential targeted areas,” for Washington’s largest cities, according to the Washington State Department of Commerce.

Under these exemptions, a property owner, in this case ACG Acquisitions, LLC, does not have to pay property taxes on the residential improvements for a given number of years. Lynnwood City Council accepted the City’s Business & Development Services’ recommendation of eight years. The property owner will still pay tax on the land and on non-residential improvements like the commercial portion of a mixed-use building for those eight years.

On May 29, 2007, the City Council adopted Ordinance 2681 establishing the MFTE Program to encourage housing and redevelopment in the City Center District.

#### THE UNION CARPENTERS ISSUE A WARNING AHEAD OF ENSO’S CONSTRUCTION

On September 18, 2024, the Western States Carpenters Local 425 union gave a presentation to the Lynnwood City Council warning them of how projects, similar to ENSO, traditionally set themselves up to be susceptible to an “underground economy” in the construction industry.

This “underground economy,” according to union representatives, encompasses a variety of concerning things including misclassifying and exploiting workers, tax fraud, bringing immigrants as far away from the border as possible (i.e. Washington State) to trap them with false promises and cutting off access to home resources, wage theft, unfair labor practices, and then some. Workers subjected to these wage thefts and unfair labor practices often know they are being taken advantage of but choose not to speak out in fear of retribution, deportation, or being locked out of securing future job opportunities in the region.

During this meeting Carpenters Local 425 President Zach McCown suggested to council, one month after ENSO official broke ground, that the project would be an excellent opportunity to monitor the construction of the project through potential joint job site walks (with elected officials and union reps) to ensure it proceeded in accordance with L&I standards.

The Council discussed potentially working with the union to implement community workforce agreements and project labor agreements sometime in the future.

However, two weeks later, the City of Lynnwood removed that September 18

Work Session video from its archives under the direction of the Mayor, according to the union.

The Lynnwood Times can confirm that the September 18, 2024, Work Session is not listed in the City’s Council Meeting Archives. However, Lynnwood Times was able to obtain a copy of the official written minutes of the September 18, 2024, meeting that was removed from the City’s Archives without council approval—the minutes, compiled by the Luke Lonie, City Clerk, were approved by the council on October 14, 2024.

Carpenters Local 425 President Zach McCown challenged the City’s decision to remove the video during a City Council public comments section and multiple emails sent to Mayor Christine Frizzell and City Council members leading up unto that meeting; but as of October 23, 2025, the City has yet to restore the video to its archives. In addition, most of McCown’s email correspondences except for responses from Councilman Patrick Decker and then-Councilwoman Julieta Altamirano-Crosby went ignored.

“It has been 131 calendar days since the carpenters last spoke here at the Lynnwood City Council. In that Work Session held on September 18, 2024, we addressed the ongoing issues of an underground economy that involves the exploitation of workers, wage theft, and tax fraud,” said McCown. “The council members seemed shocked and concerns about the power point and talking points that were brought forward. It was a major letdown and concern when the video posted on the Lynnwood City Council website was removed.”

The Lynnwood Times reached out to the City of Lynnwood to ask why the video was removed and was issued the following statement:

“The City received threats of litigation concerning statements made during the meeting by members of the public against other members of the public. On the advice of our insurance counsel, we’ve removed the video. Please be aware that there isn’t a legal requirement to create a video recording of meetings, so there isn’t a legal requirement for us to allow this video to remain.”

An investigation conducted on the ENSO project appears to reveal that the Carpenters Union’s warning, back in September 2024, had been right.

#### ALLEGED WAGE THEFT AND UNFAIR LABOR PRACTICES AT ENSO

The Lynnwood Times heard personal testimonies from three of the 50-60 construction workers currently working on the ENSO project via GMH LLC, which ACG and Clarion Partners – an investment firm backing the project – is using to build the project as a subcontractor. GMH LLC is responsible for ENSO’s drywall, painting, metal stud framing, and other jobs.

When requesting to interview more workers than the three, many expressed fears of repercussion for speaking out against their employer.

To honor their request for anonymity the workers interviewed shall be referred to as Worker A, Worker B, and Worker C.

The Lynnwood Times reviewed copies

of Worker A’s timecards and pay stubs to corroborate his claims. In the pay period dated July 19, 2025, through July 25, 2025, Worker A clocked 44 hours of work but was only paid for 40 hours; this was Worker A being generous and rounding down. His actual total hours worked were more than 45 hours and 15 minutes, working from 6:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday (9 hours, 15 minutes), and 6 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. on Friday (8 hours, 15 minutes).

In addition to this, the worker claimed that there is an expectancy to show up 10-15 minutes before 6 a.m., which is unpaid and not reflective on their timecards. This expectancy to begin work 15 minutes early and stay 15 minutes late (which explains the 3:15 p.m. leave time) is to make up for the state mandated 30-minute paid lunch break when working a 5, or more, hour shift. Workers do not receive the two state-mandated paid 10-minute breaks, he said.

In other words, workers were awarded their 30-minute unpaid lunch breaks but were expected to begin work 15 minutes early and leave 15 minutes later to make up for it. The Lynnwood Times has photographic evidence of workers arriving on site prior to their start time but cannot confirm whether workers began working at that time, or not, given it’s a closed construction site.

Worker A’s pay periods in the weeks of May 31 through June 7, June 9 through June 13, July 7 through July 15, August 11 through August 19, August 18 through August 26, September 9 through September 16, all reflected similar wage theft: working 44 hours but being paid for 40. This amounts to a total of at least 29.75 hours of unpaid work in just the examples we reviewed.

But the amount paid was slightly adjusted to compensate. For example, workers with GMH LLC are paid a set rate of \$32 an hour. Whenever a worker works more than 40 hours a week this rate increases to \$35.20, which is still \$12.80 lower than the state mandated time and a half – which in this case would be \$48 an hour (\$35.20 x 1.5).

Taking into consideration construction at ENSO Began in August 2024, this would amount to \$54,840 worth of unpaid work assuming Worker A worked 44 hours a week which in fact, given his timecards, that he didn’t. What is known, from the timecards reviewed, is that Worker A should be entitled to, at the very least, \$1,428.

Applying this to all 60 employees of GMH currently working on the ENSO project this number would equate to \$85,680 unpaid work. If all 60 workers consistently worked 44 hours throughout the duration of the ENSO project, up until now, this number in unpaid wages (and state taxes) could be well over \$3 million.

ENSO is receiving \$6.4 million in tax breaks from the City of Lynnwood through 2032.

Both Worker B and Worker C had similar timecards and pay stubs. In just the time cards and pay stubs reviewed, Worker B worked 44 hours the weeks of August 11 through August 19, 45 hours the week of August 18 through August 22, 44 hours the week of June 23 through July 1, 44 hours the week of June 9 through June 13, 44 hours the week of June 16 through June 24, but was only paid for 40 hours of work

during these weeks.

“When I first started, I was told I was expected to work 40 hours a week but could work more if I wanted, I just wouldn’t get paid overtime,” said Worker B with the help of a translator. “Whenever I work more than 40 I don’t get paid overtime. There’s no extra charge or anything, it’s like working normal hours.”

Worker B explained that even though EMH slapped a rate of \$35 an hour on weeks where he worked more than 40 hours, he would still be paid the rate of \$32 an hour. Also included in his, and his co-workers’, pay stubs are deductions for Medicare, Federal Withholding, Social Security, and Labor and Industries Employee Dry (which is an L&I law for calculating insurance premiums for drywall installation). The Lynnwood Times is still investigating whether GMH LLC actually filed these withholdings.

When Worker B was asked why he, or his co-workers, did not take their concerns to Washington State Labor and Industries (L&I) he replied there is no way to file a formal complaint without their identity being revealed, and they feared in doing so would prevent their ability to secure future jobs.

Worker C worked 47 hours on the week of June 16, 46 hours on the week of June 30, 45 hours on the week of June 9, 46 hours on the week of June 23, and 52 hours in one week that was not dated. Like his co-workers, he was only paid for 40 hours during these weeks.

The Lynnwood Times also has screen-shotted text message exchanges between GMH LLC workers and their boss exhibiting an expectancy to work long hours with no expectation to be paid for any hours after the baseline 40. In one text message exchange, a worker asked (in Spanish) “how many hours do you need me to work today.” His boss replied “10. Or more if you can.”

In another text message exchange, a worker asked: “Is it okay if I just work 8 hours today,” exhibiting a culture where working more than 8/day is the expected normalcy.

The Lynnwood Times reached out to GMH LLC multiple times but did not hear back from our request for comment on the allegations of unpaid wages.

#### LARGER IMPLICATIONS OF WASHINGTON’S UNDERGROUND ECONOMY

Unfair labor practices at Lynnwood’s ENSO project are just one example of a much larger “underground economy” in Washington State’s construction industry.

In 2022, the Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to conduct a study on the nature and scope of the underground economy in Washington’s construction industry. The results of that report found that an average of 14.2% of construction workers in the state are not properly reported to payroll and tax authorities per year. The WSIPP estimates the annual total costs of this to be \$142.6 million owed to Washington construction workers, \$59.8 million owed to the State of Washington, and \$315.4 million to the federal government.