



*Spanaway Marsh in July, 2020*

## **Council Passes a Rural Reserve Rezone for Tiny Homes Community for Unhoused**

We are very pleased to announce that in researching the proposal to build a Tiny Home Village for the unhoused near Spanaway Marsh and Audubon Springs, Tahoma Audubon members have found a compromise solution that may work for all parties involved.

In late March, Pierce County Council authorized significant changes to the Rural Residential (RR) zones in Ordinance 2023-5s. These changes expanded the housing densities allowed in Parkland-Spanaway-Midland Community Plan. This violated the Growth Management Policy, which requires that a change of regulations must be completed *after* the Growth Management Policy has been amended.

In this case, the new regulation in the RR zone is in violation of county policies and regulations that limit the number of homes in this zone. **These regulations exist to protect wildlife corridors in and around the wetlands in the vicinity of Audubon Springs.**

[Resolution R2022-163](#) was also approved and will release \$22 million of funding to begin permitting and construction of a Tiny Home Village for chronically homeless individuals. It will build 285 micro-homes on 85 acres near Spanaway Loop Road. It is also north of Spanaway Marsh, an important wetland habitat for birds and other wildlife in the area. The vote to pass approval of this village was 6 to 1.

Tiny Homes communities have social and health benefits that are important for a segment of the unhoused population and are desperately needed. During the approval process Kirk Kirkland of Tahoma Audubon's Conservation Committee was in contact with council members. They assured him that problems with sewers and surface water concerns would be handled during the approval process.

Once Kirk learned that the new regulations were not in compliance with County Growth Management Policies, he provided research to the Futurewise organization. Included was a proposal for an alternative 40-acre site for the (proposed) 29 acres, which could be relocated to an alternate government-owned property. This site has urban services necessary to the community's success nearby and also has adequate buffers from wetland areas. Futurewise filed the appeal a week later.

The cost of an appeal of Resolution 2023-5 will be borne by Futurewise organization. It will be their third appeal of county actions within the last decade. The previous two appeals were settled by negotiation, without a public hearing.

Finding a viable alternative to the Spanaway Marsh site assures an outcome in this dispute that will address the needs of unhoused people in our county. Several cities in the U.S. have built successful Tiny Home Villages – such as Tallahassee, FL and Austin, Texas. The chronic homeless issue is complex and expensive to address. Our county council has voted on and funded several solutions that provide a compassionate response to this complex problem within the last two years.

It is important that Tahoma Audubon's work on this issue brings people together for a resolution that benefits everyone - birds, wildlife, and people.

You can [learn more about Pierce County Village here](#).

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***Next Conservation Committee Zoom Meeting***

***Wednesday, May 17, at 6 pm***

**Contact [kirkkirkland9@gmail.com](mailto:kirkkirkland9@gmail.com) for invitation**

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## Committee Work Updates and Good News

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### Tacoma Tree Ordinance Revision Under Discussion

Mor Furniture filed an amendment with the City of Tacoma asking to build a Furniture Outlet warehouse in a residential neighborhood where commercial development is not allowed. They want to re-zone the greenbelt open space land between the freeway and nearby school and homes (formerly owned by Tacoma Public Schools) from Residential to Commercial.

In preparation for the Planning Commission hearing, Eric Seibel and other activists canvassed the neighborhood asking people to get involved and defeat the proposal. If Tahoma Audubon can help these people defeat this amendment, they may be interested in passing a tree ordinance that could buy this property and expand tree canopy by planting trees along the freeway.

**Urban Forester Mike Carey** is working on a new tree plan for property that the city of Tacoma controls, but he has not yet published any plans. Conservation Committee members hope to meet face to face with Mike Carey and build a partnership that would allow our input on the developing plans. On June 14, Carey is scheduled to present his plan to the [IPS committee](#) (Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability).

Eric Seibel, Patti & Lloyd Fetterly, and Kirk Kirkland met in March to discuss the tree ordinance and a strategy to contact the city council and ask for a commitment to expand the tree canopy goal from 20% to 40%.

[\[Tacoma's current canopy is the lowest of urban areas in the region.\]](#)

We also agreed to use the tree ordinance passed in Lakewood as our benchmark. This would avoid debate over the wording and let us focus on getting the

ordinance passed. Lakewood's ordinance was good enough to get an award from the governor for raising the tree canopy goal as a defense against climate change. This award could be used to motivate Tacoma to do as well with their own tree ordinance revision.

On April 11, Eric and Patti met with Georgette Reuter and members of the NE Neighborhood Council to discuss a citizen's initiative to influence the tree ordinance that will be presented at the [June 14th meeting of the infrastructure \(IPS\) committee](#).

They decided on goals and actions to begin the process of engaging the city to preserve and enhance Tacoma tree canopy. The strategy for the Conservation Committee tree group is to raise awareness of the need for expanding tree canopy and to encourage citizen participation.

This issue will be framed in terms of social and environmental justice to counter the image of people advocating for trees as somehow elitist. Emphasis will be on the ways in which trees promote local health benefits and sequester climate carbon for everyone.

Eric will spread the message through Tahoma Audubon's Facebook page, neighborhood councils, and especially groups in Southern Tacoma. *Please contact Eric Seibel if you can help him spread the word.*

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### Burley Lagoon Partners Need Speakers for the Gig Harbor Advisory Board Meeting



John Garner and Bill Richardson educated people who live on the shores of Burley Lagoon about birds and wildlife habitat. These residents are now our partners in appealing an Environmental Impact Statement that would allow the largest Geoduck farm in Puget Sound.

*The county issued a DNS (Designation of Non-Significance) that said there would be no serious impact on the lagoon by additional aquaculture expansion of 30 acres. A 2017 Cumulative Environmental Analysis from*



the Army Corp found that geoduck planting and harvesting has had a significant impact on eelgrass, forage fish, and Pacific salmon. This is why we are appealing.

Pierce County will hold a hearing with the Key Peninsula Land Use Advisory Board on May 22. The purpose is ONLY for board members to ask interested groups questions about the issue.

Tahoma Audubon and others are appealing the DNS ruling on the Environmental Impact Statement. This appeal will be held before the County Hearing Examiner sometime in 2023.

Our current effort is to assemble a group to offer short statements at the hearing which will add up to a compelling story. Statements are limited to very brief windows, so many speakers are needed to cover all the important supporting evidence. *Please contact Kirk Kirkland if you would like to present a statement at the hearing.*

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## County Council Awards Inherent Rights to Orca Whales

In a 4-3 vote, the Pierce County Council adopted a resolution proclaiming Rights of the Southern Resident Orcas in Pierce County. The rights of these orcas include the right to life, autonomy, culture, free and safe passage, and adequate food supply.

*Rights also include the freedom from conditions causing physical, emotional, or mental harm, which includes a habitat degraded by noise, pollution, and contamination.*

The resolution also urges action by state, federal, and tribal governments to secure the rights of the Southern Resident orcas and of the ecosystems upon which they depend. Only 3 or 4 jurisdictions have taken this action so far.

The community of Southern Residents live in Puget Sound and were listed as an endangered species in November 2005. Despite legal protections, this orca population has declined and they are now critically endangered. Just over 70 Southern Resident orcas are left in the wild.

You can [watch the proclamation reading, presentation, and discussion among the county council members here.](#)

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## Status of State Legislation Supported by Tahoma Audubon

We're so close to the end of session! We're excited to continue to push **HB1110, Missing Middle Housing, and HB1181, Climate Planning and the GMA (Growth Management Act)** over the finish line and onto the Governor's desk to sign.

Both bills passed the Senate last week, thanks to the hundreds of groups who put the pressure on and sent or made **over 1330 emails and calls.**

While we are sad to announce SB5466 wasn't scheduled for a vote in time, Futurewise will be continuing to fight for transit-oriented development in the future.

**Futurewise** is an important partner in this work.

But there's still one last step— **concurrence.**

The House needs to concur with the amendments from the Senate by April 23rd. While we are optimistic about this process, it's easy to run out of time, which is exactly what killed the climate bill last year (RIP).

**And that's where you come in!** If we can keep the importance of these bills in front of our legislators and make sure they prioritize them, we can reach agreements with time to spare. Keep letting your legislators know how you feel about these issues!

**Audubon Washington** was successful, too. A list of bills that passed is located at this [link to bill tracker for Audubon Legislative Updates.](#)

***Your Involvement Matters!***