

Spring 2006



My goal is to increase the delivery of county services to Fircrest, University Place, West Tacoma, and the Gig Harbor and Key Peninsulas and to be the personal advocate for the constituents in my district.

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County adds 3 more deputies to Peninsula

Adding new deputies in times of lean budgets has been a challenge, but Lee was successful in 2005. He secured funding for six additional deputies for the Pierce County Sheriff's Peninsula Detachment. This was the first time 24-hour law enforcement was extended to the unincorporated areas of the peninsulas.

In the 2006 budget, Lee added three more deputies including an investigator for property crimes and for the methamphetamine epidemic.

Sheriff deputies lose a lot of time because of faulty burglar alarms; 99% are false alarms. "We aren't going to fine citizens when the alarms malfunction," said Lee. "The alarm companies will get the bill."

Work continues on a county ordinance that will ban the sale of drug paraphernalia. "I want to add teeth to the law and reduce liability for prosecutors," Lee said. "This ordinance will help protect our children."

Hearings Board ruling complicates shoreline issue

"Resolving the shoreline issue has been one of my biggest challenges. I've got a strong desire to protect the environment," said Lee. "But I also want to preserve citizens' property rights."

The delicate compromise worked out with building industry and environmental groups did both. In the end, changes provided a 100-foot buffer on sensitive shorelines in areas of marshes, estuaries, and eelgrass where salmon feed.

New buffers applied to 20% of the 179 miles of shoreline. "Areas with steep feeder bluffs and estuaries are not likely to greatly impact property rights," Lee said.

Bringing all the parties involved in this issue together was difficult. In the beginning, two groups threatened a court appeal if they didn't get their way. This settlement was challenged by a statewide group when they appealed to the Growth Management Hearing Board.

"An issue like this easily polarizes the community. With good information, people will learn how to protect shorelines while still enjoying their beach cabins and waterfront property."

Lee made sure the budget had funding

for the Shoreline Master Plan update scheduled in 2008.

"We want to tackle this issue in a way that avoids the landowner revolts that happened in King County and other counties when their critical area ordinances were revised," said Lee. Growth Management has worked in our county because both realtors and environmental interest groups have been involved in setting policy. "It works best when everyone has a say, and no one gets his way entirely. It helped that everyone was involved and committed to finding a workable solution."

New regulations go into effect in March of 2006. Writing general regulations that apply to all property owners is difficult and it is an ongoing process. "We can continue to make adjustments so that when we update the Shoreline Master Plan, we'll have better information on how it's working."



Reclamation of the 937-acre gravel mine began with an 18-hole golf course. This is the engine that generates the income and pays for the roads and sewers for the park. Long range plans call for adding a fishing pier, arboretum, and boat launch.

University Place trails and golf course part of gravel mine restoration

The funding of the Chambers Bay Golf Course was the focus of many critical news stories last year. In the controversy that surrounded the bonding, many people missed the main point—that the golf course was a small part of the park's total development. When complete, the course will occupy only 250 acres of the 937-acre park site.

In an era of tight government budgets, restoring a 937-acre gravel mine into one of the largest waterfront parks on the west coast is an expensive operation. Capital funds available for park development were already committed to improving existing county parks where restrooms and other basic infrastructure were already in place. Such renovation is more efficient—to add lighting to an existing playfield to increase play time—than to build a whole new park.

The Department of Natural Resource's minimum requirement to reclaim the gravel mine would cost \$3-5 million and would not result in public access to the site. Plans for an arboretum, boat launch, fishing pier, and a system of trails surrounding the golf course would be beyond the county's funding ability even with grants and private donations, because such a large project generates little income. Although a fee for the boat launch is possible, people expect trails and parks to be free.

This is why the golf course is the first phase of Chambers Bay development. The golfers' fees will pay not just for the development bonds, but for the basic park infrastructure of sewer, water, and access roads. And long term, the golf

course fees make a down payment on maintenance costs for the restrooms and other park facilities.

As the centerpieces of Point Defiance Park, the zoo and aquarium are not self-sufficient. Admission tickets pay about 90% of the operating costs. Taxpayers pay for new exhibits and the park budget uses sales tax revenue to fill the budget gap. At Chambers Bay, the golf course will pay 100% of the maintenance costs and still retire the construction bonds.

In the next two decades, we will add a population the size of Tacoma to Pierce County as 200,000 new people move to the county. Where will they find park space? Growth patterns show that they will live in the cities of Lakewood, University Place, and Tacoma.

Our generation will be remembered for our Growth Management efforts. Our cities are livable today because parks give us places to walk and to recreate. Chambers Bay Park will provide trails, a golf course, and access to Puget Sound. As our cities become crowded over the years, the 937 acres will develop into the park space needed for people to enjoy views of Puget Sound and boating access to the southern islands.

But such a park isn't possible without an engine to drive us into the future. A self-sufficient golf course is the key to getting it started. I hope if you have concerns or questions about this project that you'll give me a call at 253-798-6654.

New land for parks, trail extended and funds for Senior Center

Cushman Trail

Extension of the Cushman Trail from Kimball Drive to Gig Harbor North is on tap for construction in 2007.

Councilmember Terry Lee secured \$1.5 million from Real Estate Excise Taxes for the project.

In 2005, Terry Lee served as president of the ForeverGreen Council. The organization plans to build a county-wide system of trails connecting all 24 communities in the county with Mt. Rainier. The Cushman Trail will provide a major link in the trail system.



New lands for Key Peninsula Parks

County funding for a skateboard park began in 2006, and expansion of Volunteer Park is possible also in 2006. Transfer of state trust lands of 360 acres to the park district will create the site for the skateboard park. Private donations are also sought to build the facility. Terry Lee promised to support the Key Peninsula Metro Park District with matching Real Estate Excise Tax funds when the project is approved by Park District commissioners. A master plan for the 360-acre regional park is under development.

Senior Center and boat launches

The 2006 county budget set aside funds for the Key Peninsula Community Services Center. Terry Lee secured \$27,000 for the senior center, which includes a food bank and mobile dental clinic.

In 2005, the county installed a floating dock at the Randall Street boat launch. Lee added funds for maintenance and repairs to other existing launches for 2006.



Transportation:

Of bridge tolls, Powerline Road access & Gig Harbor roundabout

Gig Harbor North

When the city completed traffic studies for Gig Harbor North, planners didn't expect a hospital to be included in among the many retail businesses in the area. Nor was the increased residential growth in the Peacock Hill area factored into the amount of congestion experienced today at the Burnham roundabouts.

Plans for the hospital were put on hold last summer after a traffic analysis showed area roads were projected to fail even before the hospital is added.

The problem is a costly one to solve. It will require financial help from the county and the state. County Councilmember Terry Lee joined state legislators to find matching funds to pay for road improvements. State legislators asked for approval to use tax increment financing and other means to pay for interchange improvements.

Powerline Road

Legal access to homes currently using Powerline Road is an ongoing issue, currently in litigation. When the legal issues are resolved, if necessary, Terry Lee will look for ways to support the community in finding legal access to their homes.

Narrows Bridge tolls

With 80% of the Narrows Bridge commuters voting against tolls, any increase in tolls is likely to set off controversy. To protect the interest of the community, Lee has asked the governor to put him on the Narrows Bridge Citizens Toll Advisory Commission. "I'll work toward reducing tolls for commuters, getting vouchers for Peninsula businesses to reimburse eastside customers for their tolls, and for toll-free transit."

"The Narrows Bridge will be the only toll bridge in the state paid for entirely with tolls," said Lee. "It's an unfair burden to the community west of the bridge to pay for a state highway bridge."



Photo by Rolund Lund



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Terry Lee

Pierce County Council District 7

Resolving controversial issues and making government work for people

Since taking office three years ago, I've found the hardest task is resolving controversial issues. Once an issue gets polarized, people quit listening. Yet this is the real work of government: to provide a forum to bring people together and find a solution that works for both sides.

Resolving the Tacoma Narrows Airport expansion was my first challenge. The conflict had been brewing for years.

My next big challenge was the "Directions" package. Environmentalists wanted to increase buffers on wetlands and shorelines to protect salmon from extinction. The building industry threatened an appeal fearing that large buffers would reduce the

number of building lots and raise housing costs.

With representatives of both sides in the room, I could see that the two sides weren't listening carefully to each other. I floated the idea of using large buffers when fish and wildlife were present, then maintaining smaller buffers for wetlands without wildlife habitat.

When a Department of Ecology official agreed, I knew I had found the breakthrough that could lead to an agreement.

It still took some finesse to get the two polarized sides to make additional changes before it could pass the County Council.

Meanwhile other Puget Sound counties passed stricter wetland rules and now face a backlash from property

owners and the building industry. By trying to resolve appeals, we've saved the county legal fees and avoided the decisions that favor just one side of an issue. We've been able to find solutions that serve the needs of local people while still meeting the requirements of state law.

Pierce County now is 100% in compliance with the Growth Management Act for the first time in many years. Getting all the parties to work together has been tricky. But we're learning how to work together, and in the process, we have environmental regulations that work for the building industry while still protecting our streams, wetlands, and shorelines.