

Hoquiam Mayor Jack Durney Announces Plans to Run For Third Term

Local News

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HOQUIAM, Wash. - Mayor Jack Durney announced today he plans to run for a third term, citing successes in his previous terms such as improving the city's economy, beautification projects, sidewalk repairs, undated infrastructure and improved public safety many key concerns that came out of Hometown Hoquiam meetings six years ago. Mayor Jack Durney said in a press release today ***"I look forward to the opportunity to continue to serve the people of Hoquiam and am sincerely grateful to the support of my wife Sue Ann and my kids Jennifer Hogarty and Patrick Durney and all of the other employees of Durney Insurance Agency. Without their support I would not be able to serve. I wear very proudly a button that says "We Try Harder in Hoquiam". That defines our City of Hoquiam organization that I am so proud to lead as well as the citizens of Hoquiam who for over a century have been dedicated to taking care of their home town in so many way. My parents and grandparents have given me a legacy of city buildings, parks, and facilities that they worked hard to build over the years and have entrusted to me . With the continued help of our city family and the broader community as a whole, I will continue to work hard to keep that rich tradition alive as a gift to our children and grandchildren."*** To view the complete release from the mayor's office, click the story title.

I am announcing my intention to file to run for a third term as mayor of Hoquiam. While I can point to great progress in Hoquiam over the past 8 years, I am looking forward to continuing to put my energy and confidence into the future of my home town.

I believe the signature accomplishment of my administration has been the Hometown Hoquiam effort which has been a blueprint for progress and recovery from two decades of economic devastation. We certainly lost jobs and tax base to support crucial municipal services, but Hoquiam people never lost their pride. That is why more than 250 people participated in our Hometown Hoquiam workshops 6 years ago. They identified four major tasks for our community: (1) Improving our economy, (2) Beautifying the city and neighborhoods, (3) Fixing our sidewalks, and (4) Improving public safety. While it did not appear on the Hometown Hoquiam list, I have added a fifth, sixth, and seventh to my list of goals: (5) Updating our aging infrastructure, (6) Establishing conservative financial practices, and (7) Hiring quality people in all departments.

Improving our Economy: I have changed the focus of the City of Hoquiam to work in a stronger partnership with the Port of Grays Harbor in their efforts to stimulate development of water-borne commerce. As the lead permitting agency locally in some of these, Imperium Renewables and Westways Terminals in the T-1 area and the Willis Enterprises a T-3 near Bowerman Field are new and bringing employment and tax base to our town. We have also partnered with the business community to form the Hoquiam Business Association which promote the re-development of our business areas in all parts of Hoquiam. I am proud that we are seeing growth of small independent businesses that are creating a stronger retail community than we have seen in years. All of us at the City are focused on growing jobs and revitalizing our economy. As our new land use plan has demonstrated, we are removing any impediments to economic growth while at the same time

retaining the character of our neighborhoods. Further, our Historic Preservation Commission assists owners of historically-significant structures to take advantage of various incentives to rehabilitate their buildings.

The Future: We will continue this focus as we see more development in the T-3 (old Rayonier sawmill) area, the Anderson-Middleton property at the foot of 8th, and downtown as the area from 6th to 9th along Simpson and the waterfront is changed. The addition of a City Planner who also acts as our Economic Development Coordinator is key to continuing this momentum. I am very proud of our new Welcome sign at the entrance to the city on Sumner. We will also be installing new signs around the business areas to assist tourists and visitors to find their way around. City properties including the vacant lot next to US Bank, the farmers market building, the old senior center on 8th, and even the police station area at Rayonier Point have development opportunities that we will explore. We will also continue to focus on historic preservation. And finally, we have just applied for a \$200,000 grant to develop our waterfront with boat launch and docking facilities.

Beautifying the City and Neighborhoods: The community told us that they wanted neighborhoods cleaned up by removing dangerous and deteriorating houses and business, removing debris and junk cars, and by improving our neighborhood parks. We responded by increasing financial resources to staffing to speed the abatement process and remove dangerous structures. We also added responsibilities to our animal control officer to deal with abandoned cars.

Not content to just tear down deteriorated buildings, we have also worked to replace them with new housing. We have partnered with Habitat for Humanity to turn vacant lots in to homes for young families and also have received a three year NSP grant to partner with NeighborWorks of Grays Harbor to repair or build new homes for low income and elderly.

One program of which I am the most proud is the creation of a citizen Urban Forestry Board that has supervised the creation and administration of a very successful program that has seen over 250 trees planted along Sumner, Emerson, and in areas downtown where new sidewalks have been installed. We are the only city on the coast of Washington that has received the prestigious Tree City USA designation.

I am very proud of a goal that I set a few years ago and that was the construction of a skate board park. We obtained a \$150,000 grant to upgrade John Gable Park and in addition to fencing, parking, restroom and other improvements, we now have a cool skate board park that we can expand in the future as funds allow.

The Future: We will continue to focus on making sure that all neighborhoods in Hoquiam are free of properties that cause a neighborhood to deteriorate. And very importantly, we will make special efforts to make sure that people who are in the business of renting property are held accountable for homes that are unsafe or used for illegal purposes. We will not compromise on life or health safety in Hoquiam. The Urban Forestry Board also plans to expand tree planting in residential neighborhoods by creating partnerships with residents, the City, and various community groups. We have received a \$200,000 grant to put in a sprinkler park and make other significant upgrades in the Art Pocklington Central Playfield and will upgrade the various neighborhood parks throughout the city over the next two years.

Additionally, we are in great need of new middle-class family housing in Hoquiam and we will work

with the new owners of the Summerhaven development to assist them in expanding. We will also work with the owners of riverfront land in the north end as well as above Beacon Hill which we see as a potential housing development. At the same time, it will give us an opportunity to have a second route to the Woodlawn area.

Fixing our Sidewalks The replacement of deteriorated sidewalks is merely a dream in most cities but in Hoquiam it is a reality. We have created a neighborhood sidewalk partnership program that has resulted in the creation of over one mile of new sidewalks. We have received a Municipal Excellence Award from the Association of Washington Cities and a Governor's Smart Communities Award for this program that involves the City replacing sidewalks with the assistance of the property owners paying for the materials.

Additionally, we have received a \$1,200,000 grant to replace downtown sidewalks and lights and will be creating sidewalks along Levee from 6th to 9th that will be completed in early summer.

The future: We are targeting a \$1,000,000 Safe Streets to Schools grant to put in additional sidewalks near our schools. We will continue our neighborhood sidewalk program in the future and hope at the same time to add trees in the planting strips in those areas.

Improving Public Safety Police, fire, and ambulance services are crucial and I am extremely proud of not only the management of our departments but also the quality of our new police officers and fire fighters/paramedics. We have made a special effort to upgrade and modernize our equipment as needed and also to make sure that we hire only the best people as retirements occur. Unlike other communities, our conservative spending has allowed us to maintain a consistent level of service without experiencing layoffs. We have created a Crime Watch program with volunteers who are committed to helping the community. I was honored recently to present awards to two volunteers who had given 500 and 1000 hours of service helping at community events and patrolling residential and business areas.

The Future: Our biggest challenge at the moment will be replacing a 30+ year old ineffective aerial apparatus that has been taken off the line due to the cost to upgrade it. We will go to the community to fund its replacement later this spring. The police department is developing an Explorer post and will also be focusing on state accreditation. We remain committed to providing the most modern and equipment and to take advantages of improvements in technology that allow our people to do their jobs well.

Updating infrastructure "Infrastructure" is a very boring topic until it doesn't work. We have had failures in major sewer lines as well as two major breaks in our five mile long water transmission line. With so much of our modern water and sewer system having been installed in the 1950s, its service life is coming to an end. I have encouraged funding upgrades where appropriate to pump stations but also to the planning, design, and funding of major replacements to our treatment plants, main water transmission line and major force mains. I am proud of our acquisition of a \$9,000,000 low-interest loan to remove biosolids from the wastewater treatment facility pond as well as replacement of an adjoining force main, the removal of our Little Hoquiam Dam with a \$600,000 grant, our plans to explore the opportunity to draw significant water from a well at the water treatment plant, our application to replace some parts of the water transmission line, and the conclusion of a ten year harvest plan for our watershed timber lands which has historically funded so much of our water and sewer system.

The Future: Portions of our aging system will continue to blow out from stress and deterioration so a top priority for us is to very aggressively work to obtain grants and low interest loans for planning, design, and construction. It won't all be done in my next term or perhaps even in my lifetime but it is an important legacy for our children and grandchildren.

Establishing conservative financial practices: I am proud that we are in our second two-year budget cycle. This has allowed us to think strategically as well as tactically. Staffing and program reductions in prior years have allowed us to learn to work more efficiently with fewer people and as a consequence, we have not found it necessary to reduce staff or cut back on services. Cities are not allowed to run deficits - unlike state and federal government so we always have an eye on the pocketbook before launching new services. Additionally, we created reserve funds for the future that allow us to weather what we hope are temporary economic declines and also to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities to improve our community. I am very proud that we were able to purchase school bonds from the Hoquiam School District to assist in remodeling our middle school. It was a win-win as our interest income was more than we had been receiving on those reserves and their loan interest was lower than other sources. Both the school district and the City benefited. Finally, our department managers have been very cautious in their spending and all of them have under-spent the amount they have been budgeted to receive.

Hiring quality people: Perhaps the most significant responsibility of the mayor is to make sure that the best people are hired to manage the many functions of municipal government. A few years ago, I directed the change in our organizational structure to reinstate the City Administrator position. Under the leadership of Brian Shay who last year received the Washington city managers' Excellence Award, we are able to accomplish several of my personal organizational objectives: (1) a significant improvement in internal collaboration between departments and external partnerships with other government agencies and the business community, (2) a strong focus on economic development, planning, and securing grants, and (3) making the City of Hoquiam an organization that is a good place to work and that focuses on customer service to our community. In addition to Brian, I brought Jeff Myers on as our chief of police and Mike Folkers as finance director. Brian, Jeff, and Mike happen to be the same age and bring to our staff a great deal of energy and join fire chief Ray Pumphrey and city attorney Steve Johnson as our key management team. As retirements have occurred or people have moved on, we have hired very hard working people who serve us all extremely well. The people who work for the City of Hoquiam are outstanding and perhaps my greatest legacy.

I look forward to the opportunity to continue to serve the people of Hoquiam and am sincerely grateful to the support of my wife Sue Ann and my kids Jennifer Hogarty and Patrick Durney and all of the other employees of Durney Insurance Agency. Without their support I would not be able to serve. I wear very proudly a button that says "We Try Harder in Hoquiam". That defines our City of Hoquiam organization that I am so proud to lead as well as the citizens of Hoquiam who for over a century have been dedicated to taking care of their home town in so many ways. My parents and grandparents have given me a legacy of city buildings, parks, and facilities that they worked hard to build over the years and have entrusted to me. With the continued help of our city family and the broader community as a whole, I will continue to work hard to keep that rich tradition alive as a gift to our children and grandchildren.