

# City of Port Townsend

JANUARY 2024 NEWSLETTER

## CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

**Tues, Jan 2: Regular Business Meeting**

Election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor; Poet Laureate Welcome

**Mon, Jan 8: Council Workshop**

General Sewer Plan

**Tues, Jan 16: Regular Business Meeting**

Meetings are held at 6 p.m. unless otherwise noticed, and are subject to change. Visit [cityofpt.us/calendar](http://cityofpt.us/calendar) for updates.



A foggy winter morning in Port Townsend.

## HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM MAYOR FABER



Every year, millions of people declare their New Year's Resolutions, only to abandon them after a few weeks. I've

wondered why so few New Year's Resolutions are likely to result in actual change. I think it's because change requires dedication and persistence over time, and not the short-term thinking that a "New Year" actually means a "New You."

My experience on the Port Townsend City Council has proven just how true that is. I joined City Council in 2016 with the goal of addressing housing affordability and infrastructure maintenance. Back then, we had

already experienced a couple years of double-digit home price increases and our roads were already terribly pock-marked with potholes. But in the intervening years, these issues have gotten measurably worse. That said, I do finally see light at the end of the proverbial tunnel.

First, with the Transportation Benefit District that Port Townsend voters approved this last November, we finally have a dedicated funding source to begin repairing our failing roads. And though we should start seeing tangible progress quite soon, it will still take decades for the City to successfully correct decades of neglect.

Second, with the new (well, new two years ago) water contract with the Port Townsend Paper Mill, we

are finally saving money to keep our potable water system functional, even if it may take another decade to build a fund that can pay for our needs.

Third, with our new infill housing initiative, and the work we are setting up for the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update, we are trying to create as many opportunities as possible to address our housing crisis, even if it will still take a few years to see measurable improvements in housing affordability.

Staying persistent is hard, but it's the only way to make real change happen. Happy New Year, and the work continues...

**Mayor David Faber**

# NEW YEAR, NEW CITY BUDGET

## Investing in people and our community



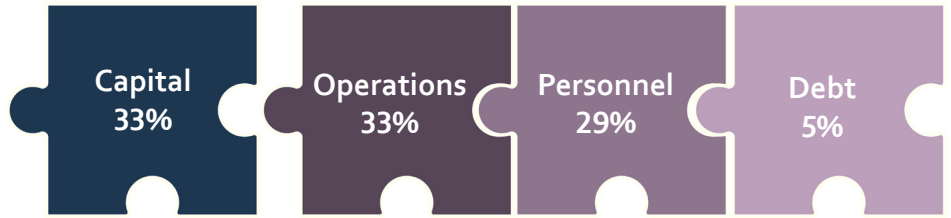
Drawing together a responsible, disciplined, and strategic budget is somewhat like assembling a three-dimensional

puzzle. There are many pieces, and each piece doesn't really make sense on its own. It takes time to understand the shape and scale of the pieces and how they relate to each other. Once the pieces start clicking together, it takes the form of something more cohesive, stable, and sensible. It becomes something that keeps our community running and guides us.

We've put our heads together to puzzle over the 2024 budget, working out a series of inter-related puzzles at the same time – all while the pieces themselves actually morph and change. For instance, we've been working toward a more comprehensive vision for our streets, to increase the availability of attainable workforce housing, and to envision the future of the golf course and a regional aquatic center. And much more.

While each of these things is, itself, substantive and complex, focusing only on one of them at a time misses a more honest discussion of tradeoffs and balance, as well as the strategic power of the whole. After all, previously, it was easier to deny there's a problem worth solving or to

## Total Government Expenditures



## Capital Improvements



give up and say we don't know how – and much harder to take on the whole darn thing. But we did.

Our 2024 budget was adopted by City Council last month and combines the work of our year-long Financial Sustainability Initiative with smart budgeting. I'd like to share five key highlights with you:

### 1. Strategic staffing.

We've been chronically understaffed. We're bringing in a few new positions like custodian, electrician, IT tech, and grants coordinator to add value and reduce overall costs.

### 2. The right tools.

We've struggled with old or non-existent tools that make it harder to deliver core services. We're investing in fleet, equipment and capital that'll get the job done.

### 3. Smart seed funding.

We've not planned well for facilities replacement and repair. We're seed-funding our facilities program, setting aside funds each year to maintain what we have and reduce the need for costly repairs.

### 4. Disciplined debt policy.

We've taken on a good deal of debt over the past decades. We're taking a more conservative approach with debt, setting better limits and challenging ourselves to sharpen our pencil for when we need to take on debt.

### 5. Sensible streamlining.

We haven't reviewed policies in place for decades. We're streamlining policies to reduce complexity and duplication, making us more efficient and effective.

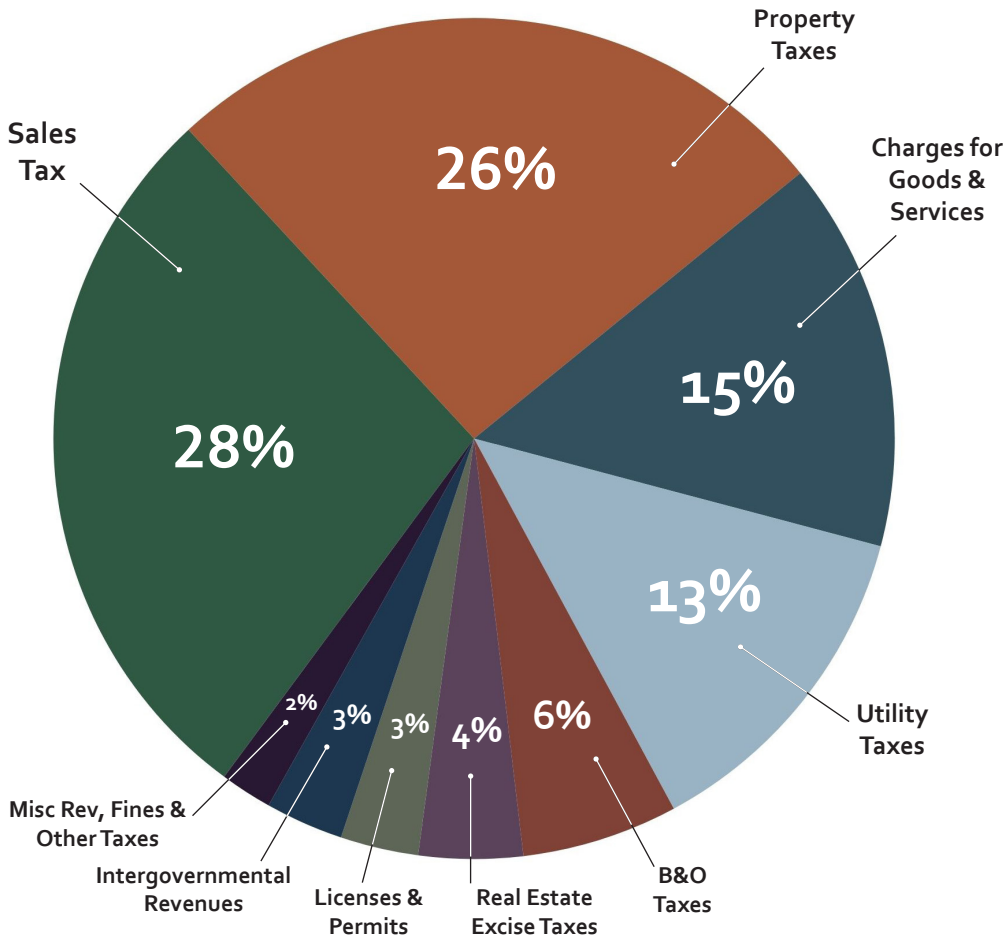
If you're puzzled by the process or how to get involved, please feel free to always reach out to me by email at [jmauro@cityofpt.us](mailto:jmauro@cityofpt.us), attend one of my coffee conversations the first Friday of the month or tune in to my regular show on KPTZ 91.9 FM each Thursday at 12:30.

Happy New Year!

John Mauro, City Manager

Read more about the 2024 budget:  
[cityofpt.us/finance/page/financial-reports-documents](https://cityofpt.us/finance/page/financial-reports-documents)

# 2024 PROJECTED REVENUE



# CITY NOTICES

## Trash collection pass-through fee

In January 2023, the "Climate Commitment Act" (CCA), a recently enacted Washington State law, introduced a program aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This initiative imposes an emissions fee, reflected as a charge at the gas pump, that pays for the new State program. The fee is authorized to be collected as a pass-through charge by Olympic Disposal and will be spread equally across our customers. Residential customers will notice a distinct line for \$0.14 per month on their invoices, commercial customers will see a line for \$1.15 per month, and roll-off customers will see an additional \$1.28 per haul.

## TBD Update

The Transportation Benefit District (TBD) is a new financial sustainability tool for funding transportation related work in the city. The 0.3% sales tax increase will go into effect on April 1, 2024, and the City will receive the first sales tax revenues at the end of May 2024. It is anticipated that the TBD will generate eight months of sales tax in 2024 for an estimated total of \$550,000 in new funds for transportation projects in the first year.

# NEW STAFF

## Welcome Patrol Officers Andres Vallejo and Alex Mussman

Our two newest officers to the Port Townsend Police Department are Andres Vallejo and Alex Mussman.

Graduating together from the Basic Law Enforcement Academy in March 2023, Vallejo and Mussman are currently doing their field training and gaining experience on a variety of calls.



From left: Alex Mussman & Andres Vallejo

When you see them out on patrol, be sure to say hello & welcome to the community!

**FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK** Get all the latest news and notices by following the City's Facebook page! Stay up to date on Library programs, City projects, street closures, City holidays, and more. [facebook.com/CityofPT](https://facebook.com/CityofPT)

# CITY ARTS COMMISSION



Conner Bouchard-Roberts in his bookshop, Winter Texts, above Aldrich's Market.

## Meet the City Poet Laureate

### Bouchard-Roberts to read at City Council January 2

Conner Bouchard-Roberts is the inaugural Poet Laureate for the City of Port Townsend.

A local poet and publisher, Bouchard-Roberts will present ceremonial, educational, and inspirational poetry throughout the year. "The position of Poet Laureate is about adding the language and depth of poetry to civic space," says Bouchard-Roberts.

The Poet Laureate Program, stewarded by the City of Port Townsend Arts Commission, begins this month with a presentation of poetry to City Council at the first meeting of the year, January 2.

Throughout 2024 Bouchard-Roberts will host literary events, work with the City's Public Library on educational programming, continue to bring poetry to Council meetings, and more.

Melody Sky Weaver, Director of the Port Townsend Public Library, is looking forward to showcasing poetry at the library in April for National Poetry Month. She says, "Bouchard-Roberts will be able to foster excitement around the creation and enjoyment of poetry and literary arts to a wider audience while raising awareness of the power of the written and spoken word."

# LIBRARY PROGRAMS



## History Talk

The Port Townsend Public Library presents "UFO Northwest: How Washington State Spawned the *Men In Black*" at 6 p.m. on Thursday, January 25.

In the program, Steve Edmiston will share how FBI records from 1947 expose a Washington State story that shapes our current UFO narratives, from 1950's pulp magazines to the *X-Files* and *Men in Black* film franchises. Attendees will learn about the "The Maury Island Incident," a Northwest UFO sighting that is history's first alleged encounter with the so-called "Men in Black," and gain insight into FBI records that were sealed for decades.



Edmiston is a business and entertainment lawyer with Bracepoint Law, and an indie film screenwriter and producer.

**DID YOU KNOW?** The Library's core operations are funded by a designated property tax levy. Many public programs such as classes, events, storytimes, and author talks are made possible through support from the Port Townsend Library Friends and Foundation. Capital projects, like the upcoming Charles Pink House restoration, are funded partially by grants.