

Mayor puts key city issues in perspective; JBLM provides support for returning Vets

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By Pete DeLaunay

Seattle Rotarians celebrated ‘community day’ at the Westin with a record turnout to hear Mayor Ed Murray provide ‘Cliff Notes’ on his recent ‘State of the City’ address, and to learn about the ‘Heroes to Hire’ program at Joint Base-Lewis-McCord, from fellow Rotarian Lt. General Stephen R. Lanza.

President Cathy introduced Mayor Murray as a passionate leader who took the helm of our city almost four years ago following 18 distinguished years as a Washington State Legislator. She invited KUOW Executive Producer of Community Engagement, Ross Reynolds, to join the Mayor for an interview-style discussion.

No softball questions from Mr. Reynolds as he asked about the City’s feud with Wells Fargo. “The bank’s offer to end their relationship with the City immediately is a political trick,” Mayor Murray said. “They know it will take a while to end it and that the decision had as much to do with the products they sold to folks who couldn’t afford them as their being a funder to the pipeline.”



The 7-hour wait while an overturned tanker was removed from I-5 caused quite a stir. “The city has created a manual to deal with such incidents,” the Mayor said, “including coordination of downtown traffic signals when such accidents occur – but it does require coordination among several city departments and WSDOT.”



In response to a question about the coming \$275M property tax levy, the Mayor referred to a survey that reveals how addiction, mental health, and lack of affordable housing were key contributors to the homeless situation in Seattle -- that is equally daunting in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, and Sacramento among many other cities across the US.

“We created a Pathway Home program to expand our ability to get people into permanent housing

and to include people who are about to become homeless,” Mayor Murray said. “With 3,000 Seattle students homeless our mission is to get families into housing immediately.”

The Mayor said the Federal government is ‘not stepping’ up to help meet this need, leaving little choice but to raise taxes.

“It is not a tax I wanted, but as the 18th largest city in the U.S. Seattle is 47th in terms tax burden,” he said. “We have to use fairly regressive tools to make changes such as Pre-K, transit and to create more affordable housing.”

To avoid becoming a ‘city of the wealthy’ the Mayor organized a task force that came up with 65 recommendations. “If you build housing a portion must be affordable,” he said. “With 65% of the city zoned ‘low density’ (or single family) expanding urban village boundaries is a necessity.”

The proposed soda and energy drink tax is aimed at improving graduation rates. “We organized an Education Summit that established best practices for equity,” he said, “since most Seattle students are on a free lunch or other low income programs.”

During a spirited Q&A session Rotarians learned how the city was planning for increased population; that most people find themselves homeless as a result of addiction, domestic violence and even coming from the foster care system; and that Seattle Police have a systematic approach to targeting homeless people that have been involved with criminal activity.



For the day’s short program, President Cathy invited fellow Rotarian Jimmy Collins (U.S. Army Reserve Maj. Gen. Ret.) to the podium to introduce Lt. General Stephen R. Lanza who oversees the Indo-Asia Pacific Region with more than 51,000 enlisted men and women in his command.

General Lanza who will retire this year told Rotarians that JBLM is one of the most requested posts in the military. “With more than 9,000 military transitioning to civilian life here, support from this community for the ‘Heroes to Hire’ program has been outstanding,” he said, ‘as 55% of those coming out of the military will stay in the Puget Sound area.’

He recognized Microsoft, Amazon, Starbuck’s and the Painters and Allied Trades Union for their special programs to train and hire

veterans. He concluded by describing the JBLM Job Center as a one-stop-shop to hire a veteran.

President Cathy then presented him with a Paul Harris Fellowship and a special 'Globe' award for his outstanding service to the community.

President Cathy opened the day's busy program by introducing Mark Wright with the day's invocation, followed by Kim Moore who led in the singing of 'The Best Things in Life are Free', accompanied by Ken Grant on the piano.

