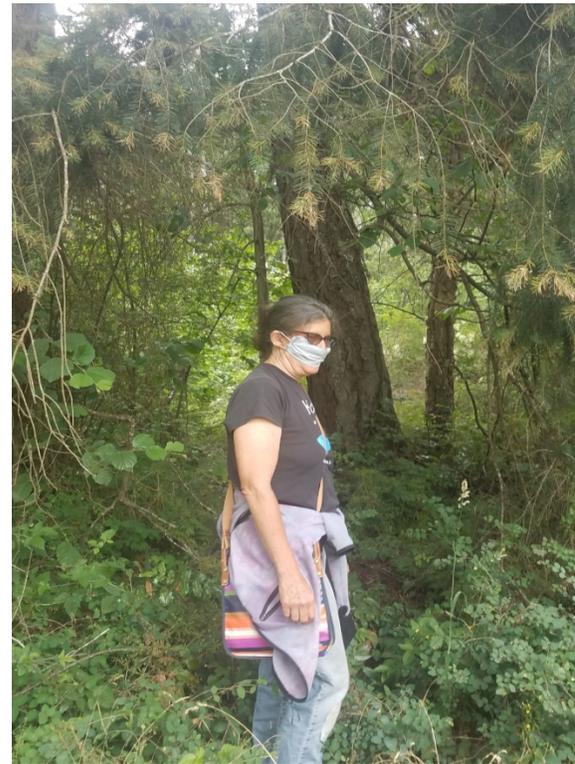


## Saving the Trees of Tumwater

On a warm and muggy Sunday, the day after Independence Day, about a dozen masked individuals led by Port Commissioner E. J. Zita tramped through snowberry, salal, and sword fern in the woods of District 4, part of the undeveloped Port property in Tumwater. Why were we willing to risk sweating behind our masks and stepping blindly into beaver holes to do this?

Because we are citizens alarmed by the Port's very rushed and hush-hush proposal to sign a 10 year lease of the 200 acres to one of the country's largest warehouse developers, with practically no questions asked. No alignment with established Port real estate plans. No respectful consideration of the concerns raised by approximately 300 letter-writers, or of the dozens who have testified at recent Port meetings. No serious and coherent responses to the doubting questions posed by Tumwater Mayor Peter Kmet and many Tumwater city council members. A passing glance given to grave financial and environmental impacts, out of step with current realities.

We wanted to see for ourselves the natural landscape under threat of removal. Commissioner Downing has described the forested area, 120 acres of the 200 proposed for development, as valueless trees left over from a now defunct tree farm. When we first entered off of Kimmie Road, I did see a lot of "junk" plants: e.g. non-native and invasive Scotch Broom and St. John's Wort. But as we got deeper into the woods, the Douglas firs and other native trees grew bigger and more abundant, and the understory was rich with the native plants that create important animal and plant habitat and conserve soil moisture.



(Photo: Lisa Ceazan)

This entry begins with a photo of local environmental activist Esther Kronenberg next to some of those “insignificant” Douglas firs, which are adorned with hazelnut and trailing blackberry and the already-mentioned snowberry and salal, among other very significant native plants. To the right is a photo of gopher holes outside the wooded area. Below are more photos of these beautiful woods. We can appreciate how important it is to save them by not only viewing their beauty, but by examining the issues that cause them to be under threat.



(Photo: Esther Kronenberg)



(Photo: Lisa Ceazan)



(Photo: Esther Kronenberg)

Below is a general list of some of the issues at stake and why Olympia Indivisible and many allied groups and individuals in the community are fighting this deal. The two overarching issues are: environmental protection and lack of democratic conduct on the part of the Port. ***We need your voice! Contact the Port via the link by Monday, July 13<sup>th</sup> (the day they take a vote) and tell them NO!***

You can sign up with [CommissionCoordinator@portolympia.com](mailto:CommissionCoordinator@portolympia.com) to get updates about meetings. And if you send email to that address, your public comments can be shared with all Commissioners, and included in meeting minutes.

### **What is the environmental value of this land?**

- Ecosystem services, including stormwater runoff filtration and mitigation, is estimated to save \$2 million/year. Trees perform the latter important service, especially in this area where there is much unnaturally compacted soil. It is a high groundwater hazard area.
- Carbon emissions drawdown (sequestration) and storage by the trees, estimated at 443 tons sequestered annually and 11,136 tons total stored carbon.
- Gopher habitat in unforested areas of the property that must be protected. Gophers are a signature species for prairie ecosystems. The Habitat Conservation Plan, in the process of development between Tumwater and the Port will address this (the HCP is a federal mandate) and it will not be completed for two years.

### **What will be the negative impacts if a mega-warehouse is developed on this site?**

- The Port will be signing over control to a huge corporation.
- Mitigation costs to the Port possibly up to \$20 million – which means we, the taxpayers, will bear that burden. The Port continues to make poor real estate decisions in their haste to cover their financial mistakes and frequently have raised our taxes to cover them.
- Heavy diesel truck traffic and the resultant air and noise pollution affecting residents and, significantly the children at Bush Middle School. Safety is also a serious concern.
- Loss of urban forest = loss of carbon sequestration. The science-based Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan, drawn up by Tumwater, Olympia, Lacey and the County, and most likely to be adopted by the end of the year, will

require more trees be planted and tree canopy preserved in Thurston County in order to meet greenhouse gas reduction targets. The Tumwater Urban Forestry Plan also includes preservation of the city's urban forest and that it needs 242 acres of Port land in order to achieve its canopy goal.

- No significant economic benefit to the community. As the City of Tumwater has pointed out to the Port, a mega-warehouse would offer lower job density and generate less tax revenue.

**The Port's lease of District 4 to a warehouse developer does not align with plans for this property per the Port's Vision 2050, its still-unratified 2018 Master Real Estate Plan, and the Tumwater Comprehensive Plan.**

- Of the 10,000 respondents to the Port's Vision 2050 plan, at least 2,000 requested that a portion of District 4 be reserved for recreation. Environmental sustainability was a top priority stated in Vision 2050.
- Real estate goals set forth by Vision 2050 were to create and support small and emerging business, e.g. light industrial and to evaluate and pursue green energy production alternatives.
- The Port has in the past emphasized the importance of environmental stewardship in its Tumwater properties outside of the airport. The Port appears to be avoiding necessary environmental reviews
- In a recent letter to the Port of Olympia, the City of Tumwater reminded the Port that this area has long been planned for light industrial and commercial development, that they desire tree preservation for carbon mitigation, and that they would like much of the area preserved for recreational uses (e.g. Little League fields, bike and pedestrian trails.)

**Port Commissioners Joe Downing and Bill McGregor, along with Port Executive Director Sam Gibboney and Business Development Director Allyn Roe have acted undemocratically.**

- The proposal was introduced May 28<sup>th</sup>. Several meetings were held in June with the intention of voting on the proposal on July 13<sup>th</sup>. That is, *just a little over a month was dedicated to consideration of the 10-year lease proposal.*
- No public outreach was made to the owners of the property – the citizens of Thurston County - about these meetings. Several meetings were scheduled with just a few days notice.
- Commissioner Downing and Commissioner McGregor (who is up for re-election next year) have regularly discounted and attempted to invalidate the letter-writers and meeting testers who are protesting this proposal.
- Commissioner Downing has accused Commissioner Zita of an ethics violation for contacting Tumwater officials with a request to share her PowerPoint presentation. Apparently, his concept of ethics does not embrace dishonest and misleading self-representation. Amy Evans was a tester at a June meeting, one of two in favor out of a dozen or more otherwise against the proposed lease (including many Indivisibles, I'm happy to say.) She presented herself as a regular member of the public.

***Who is Amy Evans? The Kidder Mathews broker who has been negotiating the deal between the Port and Panattoni Corporation.*** *When I pressed Joe at his Commissioner Chat as to why he didn't call her out, because she **never disclosed** her role in the proposal and that **she stands to profit from it**, he replied, "Everyone is entitled to their opinion." Allyn Roe's rejoinder was that all her credentials were listed on the Port website – as if that somehow obviated her ethical obligation to disclose personal connections when making a public statement. To do so is common practice in law, politics, journalism, and scientific research.*

- Commissioner Zita, who is the sole commissioner opposed to the lease, was excluded from one meeting when it was scheduled at a time she was not available. She was not allowed to present her PowerPoint slide show, which

affords an alternative perspective about the property. (A local activist has submitted it, so it will be part of the public record.)

- Commissioner Zita is regularly prevented by Commissioner Downing from sharing relevant information at meetings. She is effectively muzzled, and is thus she is restricted in her ability to represent her constituents.
- A former Superior Court judge has been hired to investigate an ethics complaint against Commissioner Zita, one of several. The right of commissioners to take notes on a computer during executive session has been removed, apparently based on a fear that Commissioner Zita is spying and sending information to members of the public.
- The Port Commission (Downing and McGregor) refused to enter into public record the letter from the city of Tumwater expressing its concerns about the lease deal. (It has been submitted by a local activist.)
- The commissioners not only were *not* invited by Port staff to a special meeting where Ms. Gibboney and Mr. Roe presented the proposal to Tumwater officials, they found out about it from Tumwater.

### **Our Questions and Commissioner Zita's Pragmatic Recommendations (in quotes) for Moving Forward:**

- **How Will the Port Respectfully Collaborate?** "Port Commission should have a work session with Tumwater - with appropriate notice, scheduled when all can attend."
- **Where is Our Money Going To and Coming From?** "Port needs a pro forma detailing costs associated with the Panattoni proposal."
- **Realistically, What Is the Current Market Potential for the Property?** "Port needs an updated market analysis of the NMIC (New Market Industrial Campus) in Tumwater."
- **What are the Environmental Mitigation Needs?** "Port needs a full ecosystem services analysis of NMIC District 4 (Tumwater urban forest and High Groundwater Hazard Area near Bush Middle School.)"

- **Where is the Public Outreach?** “Port should have public forum(s) on the Panattoni proposal.”