

# SHELTON-MASON COUNTY Journal

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## BHO center is a go

*Behavioral health facility opens next week*

By Michael Heinbach

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Just a year removed from the Board of Mason County Commissioners, Terri Drexler couldn't contain a grin Monday afternoon during an open house and ribbon-cutting at the Thurston-Mason Behavioral Health Organization's new Shelton Short-Term Evaluation & Treatment Center.

During her time on the commission, which ended after she chose not to seek re-election in 2018, Drexler spearheaded the mission to bolster mental health and addiction services within the county. As a result, in December 2016 the Thurston-Mason Behavioral Health Organization (BHO) purchased the former PUD 3 building on the corner of West

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## Inslee's strategy for homelessness draws reaction

By Isabella Breda

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Jay Inslee released his homelessness strategy in the governor's 2020 supplemental budget, which proposes using \$300 million — including emergency reserve funds — in the next two years to increase grant programs for local governments, improve existing shelter facilities and extend housing assistance to more individuals in need.

"The reality of it is it's an ongoing problem," state Rep. Drew MacEwen (R-Union) said. "To solve it with one-time money creates a significant legislative budget issue."

Mason County has one homeless shelter in Shelton

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On a tour near the city's former C Street landfill in August, Shelton Public Works Director Craig Gregory — third from left — gives an update on the site to, from left, Shelton City Council member Kevin Dorcy, Mayor Bob Rogers, council member Joe Schmit, council member Eric Onisko, City Manager Jeff Nitin, council member Kathy McDowell and council member Gary Cronce. *Journal file photo by Gordon Weeks*

## Will Shelton finally clean up toxic dump?

*Department of Ecology considers city's plan to cap C Street dump site*

By Gordon Weeks

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On July 2, 1986, two Washington State Department of Ecology inspectors visited the City of Shelton's former C Street dump. In their inspection report next to the category type of treatment system, they wrote "none"; under the type of facility, they wrote "closed" dump."

They used the word "closed" because the facility was supposed to be shut down at that time.

"Access gate open on arrival, apparently stays open all the time, dump has been recently used for sludge dumping apparently by the City of Shelton STP (sewage treatment plant)," the handwritten report stated. "Also lots of vegetation dumping recently. Dump obviously used for rifle practice by the public."

When it came to grading the operation, the inspectors marked an X in the box "unsatisfactory."

The next year, the city hired an environmental consulting firm to provide guidance and alternatives for closing the landfill. The draft report that followed recommended evaluating access to the site, covering the waste disposable area with soil and perhaps monitoring the groundwater.

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Garbage is discarded and burned in 1949 at the City of Shelton's C Street landfill. *Courtesy photo*

## Dump has a toxic history

By Gordon Weeks

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For decades, trash was torched, toxic sludge was dumped and rats were bonked with baseball bats in a scalloped depression west of Shelton.

Ninety-two years after the C Street dump

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# Dump: Cleanup ideas for C Street dump go back 32 years

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Thirty-two years have passed since that recommendation.

These days, anyone can still walk around the gate to the overpass that crosses U.S. Highway 101 and wander on the former dumpsite; no fences have been erected, and no signs indicate the landfill ever existed.

In 2015, Ecology made the city responsible for cleaning up the site. The Ecology provided the city with funding for the cleanup of the landfill through the Toxics Cleanup Remedial Action Grant. The agreement required the city to complete a remedial investigation and feasibility study, and draft a cleanup plan.

The city this year considered five possible cleanup plans proposed by Aspect Consulting of Bainbridge Island, which has studied the landfill for the city since 2015. In an interview with the *Shelton-Mason County Journal* in July, Shelton City Manager Jeff Niten said the five plans range in cost from an estimated \$1.5 million to \$28.5 million. The least expensive option is "capping" about 1 1/2 acres by spreading soil on top. It would cost an estimated \$28.5 million to dig out the contaminated soil 65 to 70 feet deep and haul it off to an incinerator, Niten said. The other three proposed plans use a combination of those two options, and the costs are unknown.

In August, the city sent the state a proposed capping plan that is neither the least or most expensive option. Ecology sent its response to the city's proposed plan on Dec. 3.

"For the most part, Ecology was pleased with the report," wrote Andrew Smith, the unit supervisor for Ecology's toxics cleanup program.

The city received seven comments from Ecology. The state wants the results of the most recent groundwater tests, and asks whether the city will be able to use stockpiled soil near the access road to the site, which might affect the cost of the capping.

Also, "because this is a landfill and the landfill cap is only a few feet thick, the institutional controls for this site should also include a fence around the landfill cap to prevent disturbance and exposure to the contaminated soils," Ecology states.

The city's consultants will address the state's comments and then send it back to Ecology by mid-spring, Niten told the *Journal* last week. The city needs Ecology's final approval before it can put the project out to bid, he said.

The cost of the cleanup and capping will depend on how much soil will be removed, if any, before capping the site with clean soil, said Craig Gregory, the city's public works director. The use of impervious membranes to make the site water-resistant would make it more expensive, Gregory said.

The city has set aside money to pay for part of the cleanup, Gregory said. Ecology told the city it has grant money earmarked for the project, he said.

Gregory said one more round of testing will happen.

"We think we gathered enough information to see if the contaminants haven't spread," he said.

The city burned a lot of garbage at the site during the 1950s and '60s, Gregory said.

"It's really old garbage, so a lot of it has broken down," he said. "It's not producing methane gas."

"We'll have no public health risks once it's done," Gregory said of the proposed cleanup.



ABOVE: The landfill is located on the west side of U.S. Highway 101. *Journal* map

AT LEFT: Tests of the soil and groundwater have been conducted on the site of the former C Street landfill, where the City of Shelton and businesses dumped toxic materials for decades. This photo was taken in August. *Journal* photo by Gordon Weeks



Friday, December 27<sup>th</sup> • 8:00-9:30pm & Saturday, December 28<sup>th</sup> • 8:00-11:00pm —Robin Hood Village Pub



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# Rat bonking, smelly smoke, salvaged treasures

## Shelton residents remember C Street landfill

By Gordon Weeks

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In the late 1960s, Shelton teenager Susan Pogreba and her friends visited the C Street dump to enjoy "rat bonking."

"It was partying, drinking, smoking, hanging out," she remembered. "But some people actually had bats and pursued rats."

Lark Stebbins did the same thing as a 16-year-old, "usually with a couple carloads of boys. Not many girls went when I was around it. As an animal lover now, I can't believe I had fun. But yeah, we all grow up."

"Back in the '50s, my uncle would take me up to the old dump and we'd shoot at rats with slingshots," Gus Lester recalled.

Brian-Liana Schoening describes his method: "We'd pull in there, with lights on, turn them off and get ready with our weapons. Turn the lights back on or use flashlights and the rats would be running wild. We'd shoot a few and do the light trick over again."

Pogreba, Stebbins, Lester and Schoening are among the Shelton natives who shared their memories of the city's landfill on the Facebook page "Well, You Might Be from Shelton If ... " at the request of the *Shelton-Mason County Journal*.

Several people mentioned the treasures found around the debris.

"In the early '60s, I remember the man who ran kind of a junk store at the dump, things he'd collected from the trash,"

Karen Kramer Farris recalled.

"I remember salvaging water heaters when I worked for L.O. Seljestadt," said Glen Lockwood. "I cut the tops and bottoms off with a cutting torch for use as culverts."

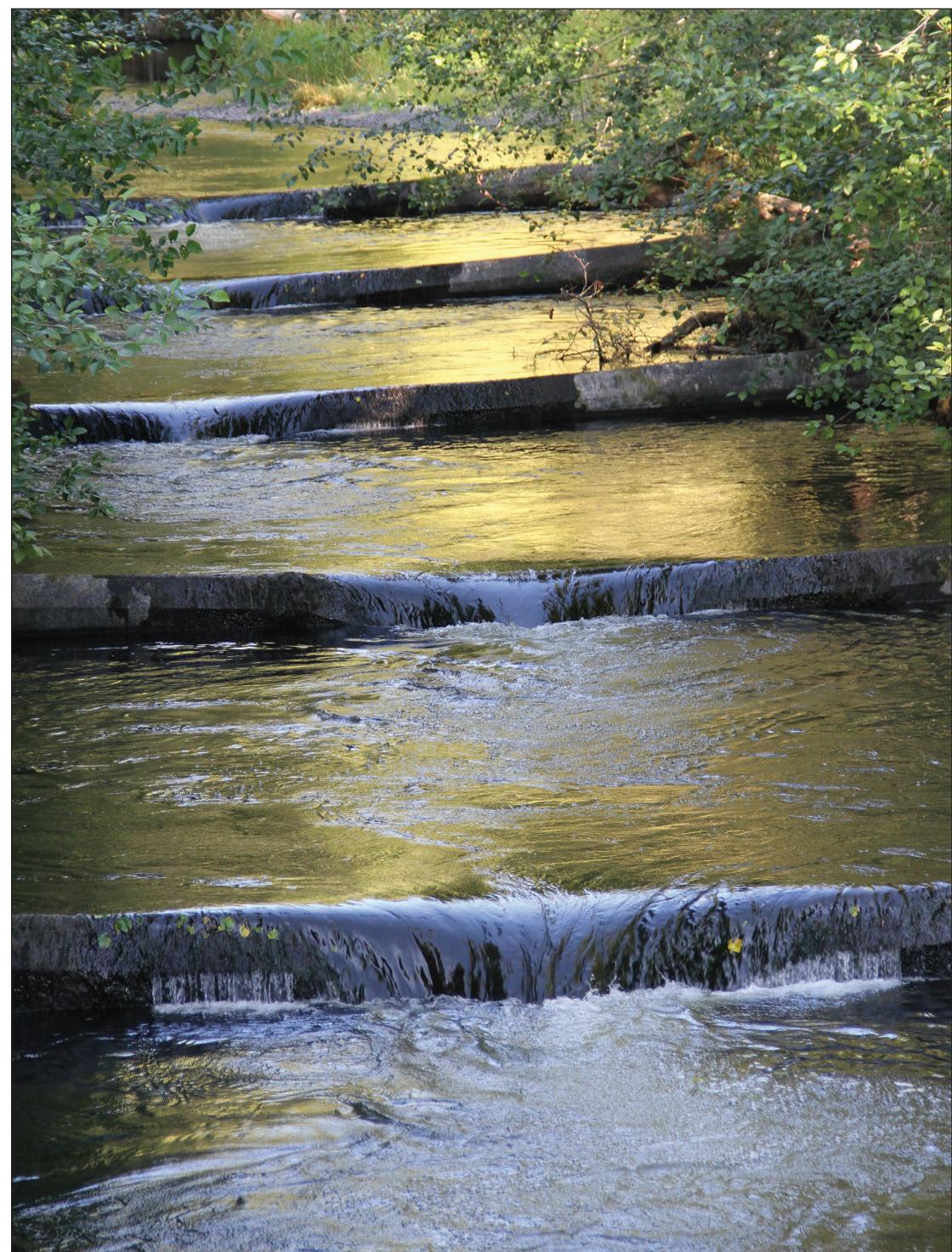
"My dad used to bring back more stuff than he took," said Janeen Deyette Anderson. "It seemed like it anyway. I got a couple bikes that way. That was in the late '60s."

"We would always find 'treasures' to bring home," said Sue Freeman Hickson. "If Dad didn't find whole tricycles and bikes, he would find parts and bring them home and make us 'new' ones. I remember hearing about the 'rat bonking' excursions from my older siblings. I seemed to remember it being some kind of senior class fundraising thing, but that could have been just a cover story."

Others recalled the toxicity.

"I remember going there with my dad and grandpa as a kid," said Robert T. Aaron. "It smelled awful. And especially when they would burn the garbage, it smelled even worse. And once, when our yard was infested with large rats, my parents thought they came from the C Street dump."

"Our parents would drive our car down into the dump and were instructed where to park and throw our garbage into the smoldering fire," said Micki McMath. "There was also a stash of items up front for sale that they had salvaged. There was always the stench of trash. As a child, I likened it to what hell must be like."



Goldsborough Creek flows recently just south of the former C Street landfill. Miles Sand & Gravel owned land lies between the site and the creek. Journal photo by Gordon Weeks

## History: Ecology noted in 1986 that landfill was not closed

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opened as a city landfill — and 33 years after its closure — a proposed plan is being shaped by the City of Shelton and the state Department of Ecology to clean up toxic remnants at the 16.7-acre site.

Private companies mined the site for sand and gravel before the City of Shelton purchased the land in 1928 for a dump. In 1931, the city sold the property to Rayonier Pulp and Paper with the stipulation that municipal dumping could continue.

That arrangement ended in 1949, when the site was quitclaimed back to the city.

"As was typical for the time, landfill operations consisted of in-filling the topographic depression with minimal controls or management," Ecology noted in a site hazard assessment.

In the mid-1950s, a simple incinerator began operating at the site to reduce the volume of waste, with the ash disposed in the main pit of the landfill. The incinerator was removed, and the waste was burned in the open.

The former Rayonier pulp mill and research laboratory deposited by-products and demolition debris at the dump.

In 1972, the state passed its first solid waste regulation that required municipalities to cover debris daily, restrict access and control vectors for landfills. The Olympic Air Pollution Authority and Mason County Regional

Planning banned open burning at the site beginning in August 1974.

But the toxic dumping continued.

Between 1976 and 1981, baghouse fly-ash generated by Simpson Timber Co.'s Oakland Bay mill was collected, mixed with water, processed through the city's wastewater treatment plant and dumped at the landfill.

In a December 1981 letter to the mayor and members of the then-Shelton City Commission, then-Mason County Health Officer John Butler said the city had been observed dumping sludge from its treatment at the C Street dump, despite the fact that it was not a permitted solid waste disposal site. The city was dumping about 120,000 gallons of sludge each month, creating a 4-foot-deep pond accessible to people and animals, the letter stated.

In the letter, the county ordered the city to stop disposing the sludge at the site, and to establish a schedule "for submitting a plan and timetable to the Health Department for fencing or otherwise limiting access to the sludge already deposited at the Old City Dump."

In 1986, an inspector from Ecology noted that the landfill was still not closed and observed fresh sludge. Citing that report, the county instructed the city to close the dump in compliance with state laws and to monitor the water. Ecology also ordered the city to close the landfill under the State Model Toxics Control Act.

In Environmental Protection Agency

study conducted in 1986 concluded the dioxins at the dump remained a concern, but the risk to city residents was low.

The spotlight shone on the former dump in 2012 when Hall Equities proposed the Shelton Hills development of as many as 1,750 residential units. The dumpsite is just south of the proposed development, adjacent to the site where a proposed elementary school would be located. Toxic Goose Lake, also contaminated from waste, sits just beyond the north border of the proposed development.

The project stalled after Hall Equities balked at paying for road improvements required by the state Department of Transportation, and power infrastructure required by Mason PUD 3.

In June 2014, Ecology completed a site hazard assessment of the C Street landfill. The state gave the site a hazard ranking of 3 on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing the least potential threat to people and/or the environment, 5 the most.

"There is currently no documentation confirming the presence of the substances of concern in surface water, air, or groundwater," Ecology reported. "The presence of dioxins in surface soils, however, has been confirmed."

The site was placed on Ecology's Hazardous Sites List. In 2015, Ecology determined the city was responsible for cleaning up the site.

Some residents have told the state

and the city they believe the groundwater must be damaged by the dioxins. Shelton resident Patricia Vandehey has studied the site and the state's response for a decade.

At a public hearing on the C Street dump in March 2016, Vandehey told city officials, "Ecology claims dioxin binds with soil, it doesn't move around to be breathed in or get into the human body. The area where the dumping was done is above the level of Goldsborough Creek and could be carried by water flow or erosion into other areas. Also, in hot, dry weather, the dioxin-laden soil can be blown around, inhaled or carried on shoes and clothing."

In an interview with the *Shelton-Mason County Journal*, Vandehey said she is dismayed by the site cleanup's slow pace.

For the city and the state, "their answer is always, 'Let's do a study,'" she said. "The first one was done in 1987 ... How many studies do you need before you decide to do something?"

Aspect Consulting drilled four groundwater monitoring wells and tests the surface soil and groundwater. The company also tested to see whether landfill gas is being generated.

In August, the members of the Shelton City Council, City Manager Jeff Niten and public works director Craig Gregory toured the former dump and surrounding hills. Now they await the state's final acceptance of their plan to clean the site.