



Council votes to temporarily increase utility tax rates

Ordinance will help pay for potential litigation with Sound Transit and will cost an average residence \$55.37 per year.

By ANDY NYSTROM
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Mercer Islanders will pay a temporary tax to help fund a lawsuit against Sound Transit. While revisiting potential litigation costs to enforce the terms of the city’s 2017 Settlement Agreement with Sound Transit, Mercer Island City Council unanimously passed a trio

of motions to set the wheels in motion its Sept. 15 online meeting. Council first adopted Ordinance No. 20C-20 to temporarily increase utility tax rates. The council then passed Resolution No. 1586 to authorize interfund loans, then voted to appropriate \$1.5 million in loan proceeds authorized in the resolution for litigation costs. Interfund loans in the resolution are in the amount of \$750,000 each, for a combined total of \$1.5 million, from the city’s water and utility funds to the general fund. In its second reading of the ordinance, which was rolled

over from its Sept. 1 meeting, the council passed the temporary 36-month utility tax increase — from Nov. 1, 2020, to Oct. 31, 2023. It is estimated to cost an average single-family residence \$55.37 per year (about \$9.23 every two months). The council informed the community about the scenario in an open letter on Aug. 25. The online letter noted that the city has reached an impasse with Sound Transit in discussions regarding the organization’s modification plans to North Mercer Way in the Bus/Rail Interchange design. The council had voiced concerns to Sound Transit about

its plan, in which bus passengers will transfer to and from the East Link light rail. Notably, the council is in contention about the new curb cuts to accommodate bus layovers along North Mercer Way that fail to meet the terms of the settlement agreement. There’s also the safety issue once light rail is up and running with a multitude of bicyclists and pedestrians intermingling with cars and buses next to a packed park and ride. In other action at the Sept. 15 meeting, council discussed permit expiration extensions for construction projects, unanimously adopting Ordinance No. 20C-21 to authorize building

officials to extend permits for an additional six months. According to Alison Van Gorp, deputy director of the city’s Community Planning and Development Department, many projects were halted for one to two months in the spring because of the pandemic, stay-at-home order and Phase 2 job-site requirements. Many permit applicants have requested extensions because their project expiration dates are looming and the circumstances have impacted their ability to complete their work by those times. Extensions can be made upon request with no additional permit fee.

Legendary hoops coach Ed Pepple dies at age 88

Mercer Island coach led his team to four state titles.

By ANDY NYSTROM
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Hard work, enthusiasm, toughness and determination. Those were four of many core values that legendary Mercer Island High School boys basketball head coach Ed Pepple bounced into his players’ game plan during his multitude of seasons on the Islanders’ court, according to current head coach Gavin Cree. Pepple, 88, passed away on Sept. 14, according to Cree, a former MIHS player under Pepple. Pepple’s grandson Matt Logie, also a former MIHS player, texted his close friend Cree that morning. Pepple, who passed away from cancer, is survived by his wife of 65 years, Shirley, their four children, Terry, Jill (Logie), Jody (Page) and Kyle, and six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

“He lived a very impactful life,” said Matt, adding that Pepple was all about family and building authentic, long-lasting relationships on and off the court. Added Terry: “He treated people with respect. He was very positive. He did just not entertain a negative thought.” Family was No. 1 for Pepple, who was the patriarch of “two big and loving families,” the Pepples and the Mercer Island



Former Mercer Island High School boys basketball head coach Ed Pepple, center, has died at age 88.

REPORTER FILE PHOTO

basketball community, Terry noted. Pepple retired from MIHS in March 2009 after 42 seasons at the helm and four state championships. He is Washington state’s winningest basketball coach with 952 victories. Cree, who graduated from

MIHS in 2000, will enter his 12th year as the Islanders’ head coach this season. Cree imparts the same values on his players that Pepple did on his squads. It wasn’t just basketball knowledge that they absorbed from Pepple, but forming great relationships, too, Cree said.

“He was equally special on and off the court. He cherished the relationships that he had with his players and his staff,” said Cree, noting that Pepple created a basketball culture on Mercer Island. “I think it’s a unique basketball program in the country where people feel

so connected to one another because of the coach that they played for. He was just able to bring a community together and rally around the sport of basketball.” Pepple told the *Reporter* at

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Letting their voices be heard

District student board reps make a difference.

By ANDY NYSTROM
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When they speak, people listen. Mercer Island High School students Paul Noone and Morgan Dawson are deeply involved in the school scene and receive ideas and feedback on vital issues from their fellow students across the district. As this year’s student board representatives, the duo is ready to let its voice be heard. “They actually value what you say,” Noone said of the district administration and board

members. “I thought that was pretty impactful, just knowing as a student, you have a voice and you can make change and advocate for what you want in school.” Noone is a senior and began his second year as a representative this month, and it’s junior Dawson’s first year in this position. This is the third year of the program and reps serve two-year terms. “I’m excited to get to reach out through my community and get to hear what people at the elementary school are experiencing, at the middle school and also at my high school. Kind of get a broader range of community perspective is gonna be really cool,” Dawson said.

Some of the main issues on the high-school front, according to Noone, were how class rankings affect students’ mental health along with their college application process, and decorating graduation caps. In early September, Noone and Dawson began their brainstorming process en route to compiling their first monthly student report to present at the school board meeting. Along with touching upon positive things students have been experiencing, Dawson anticipates some challenges students may be facing with the virtual learning model. “I’m staying tuned into what my friends are saying, what students are not liking about it,

and also what they do like about it and just making sure that I can communicate that,” she said. “That’s really important, and I feel like student voice really does have a pretty big impact on the decisions that are made.” It’s been a rewarding experience for Noone, who not only thrives on advocating for the students, but forming relationships with the administrators and board members. He’s

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2020 FIVE STAR AWARD
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Coach

From Page 1

the time of his retirement: “It’s been long enough. It’s time to let someone else run the show. And I am not Brett Favre.”

He began his coaching career at Fife High School in 1958 and came to Mercer Island in 1967.

Pepple coached for 49 years overall, coached an All-American game, was league and state coach of the year numerous times, averaged two players advancing into the college ranks for every season and is a member of three separate Halls of Fame.

On Sept. 14, the Seattle Mariners honored Pepple, who threw out the first pitch at a game after he retired. The M’s tweeted alongside a scoreboard photo: “Today, we join the Seattle-sports community in mourning the passing of former Mercer Island boys basketball coach, Ed Pepple. He led the basketball team to four championships during his 42 years of coaching. Rest in peace, Ed.”

“That was overwhelming,” Terry said. “He loved the Mariners, he loved the Seahawks, he loved the Sonics. He threw out the first pitch of the Mariners game a few years ago, which was a great honor for him. He was just thrilled. I’ve never seen him so happy.”

Longtime friend Greg Asimakoupoulos, chaplain at Covenant Living at the Shores, said that Pepple “took great pride in having coached and mentored guys in high school that went on to achieve in the world of sports. Guys like Steve Hawes and Quin Snyder. Ed was especially proud of how his grandson Matt Logie excelled.”

Pepple ate breakfast at Chace’s Pancake Corral on Bellevue Way so often that they named the



Ed Pepple with one of his many Mercer Island squads.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MERCER ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

“Coach’s Pick” (crepe style pancakes filled with apple glaze) on the menu for him, said Asimakoupoulos, adding that a photo of Pepple hangs over one of the tables.

As one of the last speakers at the Covenant Living at the Shores monthly men’s breakfasts before COVID-19 hit, Pepple “shared about how his less-than-desirable childhood paved the way for a successful career,” Asimakoupoulos said.

On a recent episode of the Scorebook Live Today podcast, Matt (a 1999 MIHS graduate) said that his grandfather was a competitive and disciplined coach of high-level basketball and held lofty expectations for his players.

“He just always believed in me and he helped me develop the habits that would allow me to be successful,” Matt told the Reporter. “(He) pushed me to high standards and gave me a window into his life as a coach and his values, and those have been guiding lights for me as I got into coaching myself.”

Matt got his first glimpse into MIHS hoops as a ball boy, then achieved his dream of playing varsity ball for Pepple and winning a state title in 1999. Matt played for and was an assistant coach at Lehigh University, was head coach for eight years at Whitworth University and now is the head coach at Point Loma Nazarene University.

Terry, who played for

Pepple from 1972-74, said his dad brought out the best in his players during an amazing, life-changing experience. He wouldn’t trade those times for anything.

“It was unusual, obviously, being a coach’s son. That’s not an everyday thing that people see. He was certainly hard on me as he was on all of his players, but at home he was dad. On the court, he was coach. We had a complete separation of the two. Our teams were successful and I loved playing for him. I learned a lot. He was the best coach I ever played for,” Terry said.

Travel was an immense thing for Pepple, who journeyed with his MIHS team to Juneau, Alaska, in 1973 for a tournament

and continued those trips in subsequent years. After Pepple launched Little Dribblers on the Island in the early 1970s, they traveled to tournaments in Texas each year.

Terry said that Pepple aimed to get his players out of their comfort zone on those trips, stretching themselves by meeting new people and experiencing new ideas along the way.

Pepple played for another legendary coach, Bill Nollan, at Lincoln High in Seattle before playing at Everett Community College for one year and then hitting the court for the University of Utah. At Lincoln, he competed in the state title game in 1950, and at Utah, his team played in the NCAA tournament against

Bill Russell’s University of San Francisco squad in 1955. He joined the Marines after college and married Shirley in Everett in 1955.

Pepple’s ashes will be laid to rest at Tahoma National Cemetery in Kent. Terry said they are proud of his service to the United States in the Marines.

Ryan Rosoff, a former player for Pepple, wrote on Facebook: “RIP to a mentor, boss, and legend. No way one post could summarize all that he meant to my growth and development as a basketball player and as a human.”

** Memorials may be made to the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MERCER ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

Ed Pepple speaks with Islander Evan Zahniser in 2008 at halftime of a district playoff game while assistant Gavin Cree stands in the background. The team finished 22-5 that season and was 16-0 in Kingco.



SEATTLE MARINERS TWITTER

The Seattle Mariners honored Ed Pepple, who threw out the first pitch at a game after he retired.



COURTESY PHOTO

Photo of Ed Pepple (right) with Greg Asimakoupoulos, chaplain at Covenant Living at the Shores in Mercer Island, along with Gary Snyder, former MIHS athletic director.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MERCER ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

Ed Pepple discusses strategy with his squad.