

AUBURN REPORTER

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Auburn's annual Veterans Day parade is this Saturday
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Election results for mayor, council, more



HENRY STEWART-WOOD / AUBURN REPORTER
A voter drops off their ballot for the King County general election on Nov. 2.

BY HENRY STEWART-WOOD
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The general election preliminary results are in and Nancy Backus is poised to be re-elected as mayor of Auburn. Backus ran unopposed this year.

As of Tuesday night, Backus has 4,751 votes, amounting to 93.67 percent of the total vote. The final results for the general election will be posted on Nov. 24 on the King County elections website.

Backus has been Auburn's mayor since 2014. Prior to that, she was on the city council. Before entering into the world of politics, Backus worked in finance leadership at Boeing. During the Auburn Area Chamber

More inside

See page 3 to find out what happened in other area races.

of Commerce forum, Backus stated this will be her last term as the mayor of Auburn.

Auburn City Council Position 2

The preliminary results are in for Auburn City Council Position 2. As of Tuesday night, Kate Baldwin has the lead over her opponent, Wendee Odell.

Baldwin is winning with 3,510 votes, which amounts to 60.02

percent of the total votes cast. Odell has 2,297 votes, amounting to 39.28 percent of the total votes cast. The final results for the general election will be posted on Nov. 24 on the King County elections website.

This seat is currently held by Deputy Mayor Claude DaCorisi. Baldwin has a background in journalism and consulting work and is endorsed by the King County Democrats, Mayor Nancy Backus, and several current Auburn City Council members.

Auburn City Council Position 4

The preliminary results are in for

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Officer's use of force is detailed ahead of murder trial

Jeffrey Nelson killed three and sent dozens to the hospital during his time serving Auburn.

BY HENRY STEWART-WOOD
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Auburn police officer Jeffrey Nelson was disciplined for damaging department property and swearing, but not for beating and tasing innocent people, according to police records.

Nelson is currently awaiting trial for the murder of Auburn community member Jesse Sarey in 2019. Nelson shot Sarey in the chest, then unjammed his gun and shot him in the head after Sarey had fallen backward, according to Prosecuting Attorney Dan Satterberg. Sarey, a person of color, was unarmed when Nelson shot and killed him, Satterberg said.



Jeffrey Nelson

However, the shooting of Sarey was far from the first act of violence Nelson committed against an Auburn community member — internal documents reveal Nelson's pattern of violent behavior dating back to 2011.

During his time as an Auburn police officer, Nelson killed three people and beat dozens more so severely they needed medical attention, according to Auburn Police Department's use of force documents.

According to an incomplete list of Nelson's uses of force against people in Auburn, Nelson used force 92 times between May 8, 2011, when he shot and killed a man who allegedly had a knife, and Nov. 1, 2018, when Nelson put a man suspected of stealing cigarettes in a stranglehold to the point he lost consciousness.

Use of force records indicate that the majority of the incidents in which Nelson used force — 57 out of 92 incidents — resulted in injuries that required medical attention, and 35 people needed hospitalization. Nelson injured

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AUBURN FOOD BANK



COURTESY PHOTO

Lions Club members Allen Geiszler, Gloria Taylor, Kathy Johnson, Chris Harrington and Dan Harrington pack bags for the Auburn Food Bank's Food to Go program.

Volunteers help keep kids' backpacks full

BY ROBERT WHALE
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One day a week for years, members of the Auburn Lions Club have been coming into the Auburn Food Bank to fill 420 plastic bags with food.

And every Friday during the school year, school counselors at each school receive 20 of the bags from the food bank, which they hand out to food insecure students so they won't go hungry on weekends or three-day holidays when there is no school.

Breakfast, lunch and two snacks for each day out of school — kid-friendly, high protein, low sugar foods. Oatmeal, granola bars, breakfast bars, pop tarts, single serve cereal, mac 'n cheese cups, tuna packets, cheese and peanut butter sandwich crackers. The district determines which kids receive the food.

Thirteen years from its start, the Food to Go (or Backpack) program — still known as the backpack program though now they are just plastic bags full of food — remains one of the Auburn Food Bank's top priorities. But at \$700 each week in food costs, it is also one of the food bank's most expensive efforts.

"We put out about \$700 a week for the Food to Go program because of the high protein, low sugars, single-serving kinds of food it calls for. Usually, those are a lot more expensive if you have to buy it that way and in bulk," said director Debbie Christian.

Now the account from which the Food Bank has drawn most of the money to supply the food for all but one to two years is running low. There are concerns about the program's long-term viability, according to Christian.

"In the beginning in 2007," Christian explained, "we started paying for the program kind of out of our own budget. But

about a year or two into it, we got an estate from a woman ... I did not know her, but I when I started reading about her, I found she'd been a school teacher without any children, and she had always worked to make kids' lives better. So the board decided to designate the money from her estate to pay for the program."

Christian said everyone expected the fund to last seven years, but it's lasted 13 years.

Christian and her staff are working hard to make it last as long as possible.

"I have been able to obtain a few extra grants," Christian said. "I had a United Way grant come in. And every once in a while, someone wants to do a food drive, and we can ask them to do it specially for those kinds of foods so we can continue to get a donation in for it."

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Seattle Int'l Comedy Competition

Fridays, November 5 & November 12 | 7:30pm | Auburn Ave. Theater | \$23/\$20

Auburn Veterans Parade

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Vocal Trash | Saturday, November 13 | 7:30pm | Auburn Ave. Theater | \$23/\$20



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POLICE BLOTTER

Oct. 26

No pancakes for you: 1021 a.m., 1044 Outlet Collection Way SW. Police trespassed a woman from IHOP.

Theft: 8:42 p.m., 4900 block of Wesley Court SE. A woman reported



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another female stole packages from her porch days earlier. Amazon has already refunded her money.

Oct. 27

Strong-arm robbery: 9 a.m., 2202 Auburn Way N. A strong-arm robbery went down at 2202 Auburn Way N.

Weapons offense: 12:48 p.m., 1400 block of Terrace Drive. A male (age not disclosed) was taken into custody after he discharged a firearm in the presence of an Auburn police detective.

Trespassing and brewsky theft: 2:15 p.m., 1416 Harvey Road NE. An habitual thief was arrested after trespassing and stealing a six pack of Stella Artois.

Misdemeanor vandalism: 4 p.m., 1101 Outlet Collection Way SW. A man called 911 to report that the exhaust pipe

on his red 1999 Ford F-250 pickup had been partially sawn through, and the suspects in the vandalism had sped off in a vehicle.

Theft: 3:30 p.m., 16th Street Northwest. Some evil-doer made off with a binder of baseball cards.

Misdemeanor vandalism: 11:06 p.m., 5800 block of Terrace View Lane. A woman reported an attempted theft of her catalytic converter that had occurred days earlier.

Weapons offense: 11:30 p.m., 400 block of 8th Street Southwest. Somebody shot a dog.

Oct. 31

Serial poop pitching: 6:35 a.m., 4800 block of D Street Northeast. A serial incident of human fecal matter being thrown against a residence was investigated.

Officer

From Page 1

68% of the people he used force against, which is significantly higher than the department-wide rate of 38% in 2020, according to documents.

Despite the number and severity of the assaults Nelson committed, his actions were rarely investigated by the Auburn Police Department.

The department launched internal investigations into Nelson 12 separate times during his tenure as an Auburn police officer. Only six resulted in disciplinary action. Nelson was disciplined three times for driving recklessly, twice for being discourteous and once for destroying over \$1,000 worth of a citizen's property.

Nelson was still on the Auburn Police Department's personnel roster as of May 2021 and in 2020 he was paid \$102,656, according to Govsalaries.com.

Past investigations

In July 2014, Nelson saw three members of the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe walking in the street. Nelson parked his patrol car in the street and made contact with the three people. Officer Cristian Adams was also present.

According to documents, Nelson began cussing at the men, then asked Adams, "want to f--- them up?" After that, Nelson used a Taser on one of the men before putting him in a "lateral vascular neck restraint," which is a stranglehold that cuts off blood flow to the brain. Nelson held the man in this stranglehold until he lost consciousness, and the man required medical attention from firefighters, according to police records.

The lateral vascular neck restraint Nelson used has since been banned by the Washington state Legislature.

The man Nelson attacked had allegedly committed the misdemeanor crime of

public disturbance because he was jaywalking, according to police records.

The department investigated Nelson's actions surrounding this incident and found he committed "Actual Misconduct," not for tasing and choking the man for a misdemeanor crime, but for using profanity, according to investigative documents.

Nelson was ordered to undergo "Coaching and Counseling" as discipline for his actions. Auburn Police Chief Mark Caillier, a commander at the time, was on the board that investigated and disciplined Nelson for this misconduct.

The most severe punishment Nelson ever received prior to being arrested for the killing of Jesse Sarey was a one-day suspension without pay after Nelson had crashed his patrol car into another officer's patrol car, according to police records.

The internal investigation documents reveal that damaging Auburn Police Department property resulted in more scrutiny and punishment than putting civilians in a stranglehold for misdemeanor crimes.

One quarter of the investigations into Nelson, and half of the investigations that led to disciplinary action, were because Nelson used his patrol vehicle incorrectly.

The acts Nelson wasn't investigated for are just as telling. On Feb. 26, 2017, while Nelson was helping a casino eject a customer, a man bumped into Nelson, according to police records. In response to being bumped, Nelson attacked the man from behind, put him in a stranglehold and slammed his body into the ground and applied more pressure to the man's neck until he lost consciousness, according to police records.

Nelson's attack on the civilian was so brutal that the man had to be transported to a local hospital to be treated for his injuries, according to police records.

There are no records indicating Nelson was ever

investigated for misconduct relating to this assault on a bystander.

This is not the only instance in which Nelson used violence against someone who wasn't suspected of committing a crime, according to police records.

On June 28, 2018, Nelson was responding to a welfare check in which the person eluded the police, but welfare checks are not necessarily criminal in nature. At some point, Nelson, who was a K9 handler at the time, released his dog, who then bit another police officer, according to police records.

Nelson ordered his dog to stop biting the officer, who at that point was too injured to continue, according to police records. Nelson then tackled the person whom he was supposed to be doing a welfare check on, then the dog bit the person, according to records. Nelson put the person in a stranglehold, at which point the dog bit Nelson, records show.

Nelson's reckless use of his K9, the lack of ability to control it, and his violence toward a civilian were never investigated beyond the required use of force report, according to police records.

Nelson took the lives of three people and assaulted nearly 100 people by the time he stopped working for the Auburn Police Department.

Nelson is the first police officer to be charged with murder since Washington voters approved I-940, which changes the burden of proof for prosecution of police homicides, according to Satterberg's office.

Prior to I-940, a prosecutor would have to prove an officer acted with "malice" and "lack of good faith" when they killed someone, an impossible standard to meet, Satterberg said. The new standard under I-940 is concerned with whether an officer's actions were "reasonable," Satterberg said.

Nelson will appear before the court on Feb. 28, 2022, for his trial in the murder and assault of Jesse Sarey.

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