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Council goes back to virtual meetings

City making plans to spend American Rescue Plan funds after shifting to online format for first time in two months

BY DAVID PAN
REPORTER@YOURBEACON.NET

To meet virtually or in-person – that is the question the Mukilteo City Council debated in Monday’s meeting, which was held online for the first time in two months.

Rising COVID-19 case rates, the presence of the delta variant, and a recommendation by the Snohomish Health District to shift nonessential events and meetings to a virtual format were factors in the decision by Mayor Jennifer Gregerson, in consultation with council leadership, to hold Monday’s meeting online as opposed to in-person.

The announcement that Monday’s meeting would be held virtually with no in-person attendance was sent out via email on Saturday morning, which some members of the public felt was unacceptably late.

Council President Sarah Kneller said the decision was made quickly and done with the intention of keeping as many people as safe as possible. The decision came from a place of caring and concern with the idea trying to do the safest thing for everyone involved, she said.

On Sept. 14, the Snohomish Health District posted a message that said, “The health district recommends everyone consider delaying or moving nonessential events and meetings to a virtual format. If it does not need to happen in person, it is in everyone’s best interest to reschedule or hold gatherings online for the time being.”

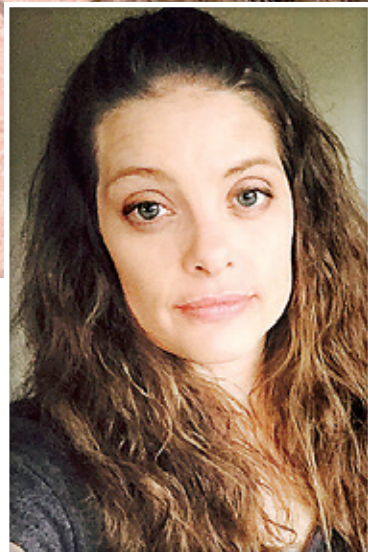
Vice President Bob Champion said councilmembers should have voted on the decision to hold a Zoom or an in-person meeting.

Champion added he was perplexed by the actions taken. He noted there was no mandate by Gov. Jay Inslee and that Husky Stadium and Lumen Field (Seahawks Stadium) were full of spectators.

“City Council meetings are essential, and it is essential that we meet in person,” Champion said. “I strongly believe we should be meeting in person with the proper safety measures in place.”

Councilmember Riaz Khan said he also preferred to be onsite, and even floated the

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Above, Erin Senge in 2015. Top photo, Erin Senge in 2021



*Letting people know
'It's OK to not be OK'*

September is National Suicide Prevention Month

BY DAVID PAN
REPORTER@YOURBEACON.NET

Erin Senge wants people to know being a mother is hard, and it’s OK to have tough conversations about mental health.

Senge, president of the Parent Teacher Student Association at Mukilteo Elementary School and a mother of three children (11, 8, and 6), shared the story of her mental health challenges as part of Volunteers of America Western Washington’s “It’s OK to not be OK” campaign for Suicide Prevention Month in September.

In the campaign, Senge and others wrote a present-day letter to their former selves where they go back and talk to the person during an extremely difficult period in their lives.

For Senge, that time started just after the birth of her oldest daughter 11 years ago.

She didn’t know it at the time, but Senge was

suffering from postpartum anxiety, a disorder in which a person experiences excessive anxiety following childbirth.

“I hadn’t heard about it and didn’t understand it,” she said. “I can look back now and know that during the first month of her life I was convinced she was going to die. I was terrified every minute.”

“I didn’t understand that it’s not typical.”

Senge had struggled with depression for much of her life, and later came to realize she also suffered from undiagnosed anxiety.

Senge and her husband had two more children, and life became increasingly chaotic.

“For me, it was more of a feeling of the nervous system being overactive,” Senge said. “I was just tense. It was a heightened flight or fight thing. Being sleep deprived as a parent of young

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Former Superior Court Judge Lucas dies

Longtime civil rights advocate was a member of the first graduating class at Mariner

BY DAVID PAN
REPORTER@YOURBEACON.NET

Former Superior Court Judge Eric Lucas, 67, died Sept. 11 following a brief illness.



Eric Lucas

Lucas was the first African American judge elected to the bench in the fall of 2004, and he served on the court until December 2020, when he retired.

“Judge Lucas was not just an excellent judge, he was an extraordinary leader and an inspiration to many,” Snohomish County executive Dave Somers said in a news release. “... Judge Lucas will be sorely missed. He was a bright light in Snohomish County, and an engaging personality for all who met him.”

Snohomish County prosecuting attorney Adam Cornell described Judge Lucas as a community treasure.

“His passing is a sad loss to his family and loved ones and those who admired and respected his work as a jurist and advocate for social justice,” Cornell said. “I was grateful to have litigated before him and to have worked beside him to advance social justice in Snohomish County.”

“As a judge, Judge Lucas saw those who appeared before him as more than docket entries. He listened to their stories, ruled fairly, and thoughtfully explained his decisions. He will be missed.”

Lucas attended school in the Mukilteo School District and was a member of the first graduating class at Mariner High School in 1972.

He attended Stanford and graduated from the University of Washington with a bachelor of arts in English and a teaching certificate. Lucas then attended Harvard Law School and obtained his law degree in 1986.

Lucas started his law career as a King County deputy prosecuting attorney, and later went into private practice, where he was the city attorney and later city ad-

see **JUDGE LUCAS** page 12 ▶

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► from **SUICIDE PREVENTION** page 1

kids, the noise of the kids arguing, all of that ratchets up the feeling that you can't relax. You can't take a breath.

"You can't respond. You can't think about complex things. You can't organize time or your mind."

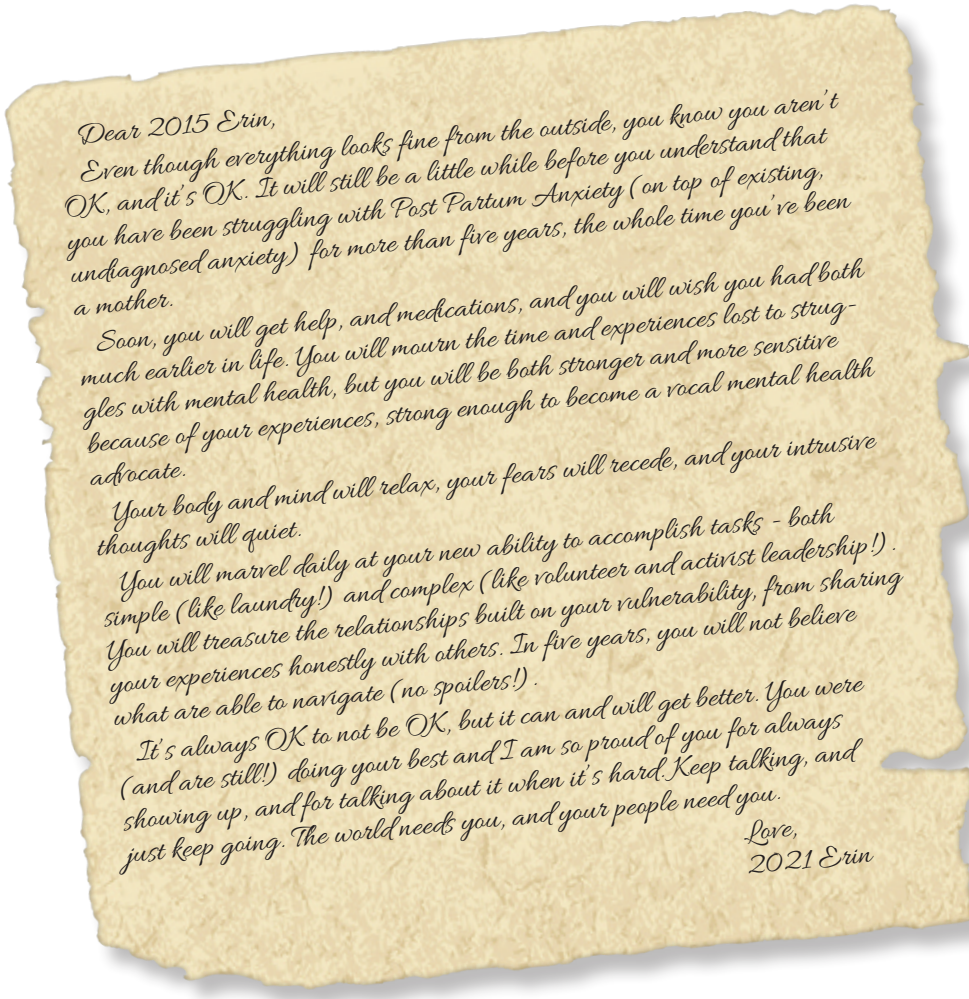
It wasn't until after the birth of her third child, when a friend pulled Senge aside and talked to her about getting some professional help. The friend took her to a doctor. Senge worked with that doctor, and later another physician, to find the right combination of medication. The difference in Senge's life was night and day.

"Once I found the right combination of medication that worked, it was like putting on glasses for the first time," Senge said. "It made an enormous difference for me."

"I'm so grateful and lucky because I had a friend, who recognized I didn't need to be feeling this way."

Senge said it's especially important for mothers to talk about mental health before and after they have children.

"There's not enough conversation about the really, really hard stuff," she said. "This is something I've always been intentional about - sharing and having those conversations with my friends, who also are dealing with their own mental health issues with having kids."



Dear 2015 Erin,
Even though everything looks fine from the outside, you know you aren't OK, and it's OK. It will still be a little while before you understand that you have been struggling with Post Partum Anxiety (on top of existing, undiagnosed anxiety) for more than five years, the whole time you've been a mother.

Soon, you will get help, and medications, and you will wish you had both much earlier in life. You will mourn the time and experiences lost to struggles with mental health, but you will be both stronger and more sensitive because of your experiences, strong enough to become a vocal mental health advocate.

Your body and mind will relax, your fears will recede, and your intrusive thoughts will quiet.

You will marvel daily at your new ability to accomplish tasks - both simple (like laundry!) and complex (like volunteer and activist leadership!). You will treasure the relationships built on your vulnerability, from sharing your experiences honestly with others. In five years, you will not believe what are able to navigate (no spoilers!).

It's always OK to not be OK, but it can and will get better. You were (and are still!) doing your best and I am so proud of you for always showing up, and for talking about it when it's hard. Keep talking, and just keep going. The world needs you, and your people need you.

Love,
2021 Erin

Getting screened for postpartum issues and mental health issues in general is important for mothers, Senge added.

The message Senge and others want to communicate in the "It's OK to not be OK" campaign is that life can get better if you get the proper help.

"It's a way for myself to go back and talk to myself and say this is all really, really hard and it could be easier, and it will get easier," Senge said. "It's not just white-knuckling it until it gets easier. It's asking for help, knowing that there is help."

When she looks at a photo from 2015, Senge can see the stress she was feeling. She is much happier in the 2021 photo.

Sharing the details of her experiences with postpartum anxiety with others has enriched Senge's life.

"I like to talk about this stuff. I have found being vulnerable and sharing this part of me has led to some of my most rewarding and valuable friendships," Senge said. "I think most people can relate and appreciate seeing other people's experiences. The more we talk about it, the easier it gets for everybody."

See this page for Erin Senge's letter to herself. If you or someone you know is struggling, visit imhurting.org for 24/7 chat support or call 800-273-8255. To read other letters in the "It's OK to not be OK" campaign go to <https://www.voaww.org>.

► from **JUDGE LUCAS** page 1

ministrator for the City of Langley. He then served as an administrative appeals judge for the Washington State Department of Ecology. During that time he served as a pro tem judge for Snohomish County Superior Court before running and winning a seat on the Superior Court.

Somers noted how Lucas volunteered his time with youth throughout the county.

"Judge Lucas was an active and engaged member of Snohomish County NAACP and spent much of his time outside the halls of justice working with youth," Somers said. "He led the NAACP's Annual Prodigies of Peace Essay Contest, helping the next generation understand their role in leading community change. Recently, Judge Lucas had been instrumental in engaging with the Marysville School District, when Black students' lives were threatened."

Lucas was active on numerous boards and commissions, including SnoCo Mental Health, Planned Parenthood, Mukilteo Boys & Girls Club, the YMCA, the Boys & Girls Club of Snohomish County, Snohomish County Legal Services, and Homage.

As a judge, he served on the State Superior

Court Judges Association's Equality and Fairness Committee for 16 years and on the Washington State Superior Court Gender and Justice Commission for five years. He also was involved in domestic violence work groups with state judges and the state Legislature. Lucas coached all of his sons' soccer, basketball, and baseball teams.

Out of court, Lucas has varied interests. He was a musician who played the trumpet and guitar. He loved to sing. Lucas was a writer, who started penning poetry in high school, and his poems were published while he was in college. Lucas later wrote books.

His first publication was the children's book "Island House." Lucas followed that with a memoir called "The Tao of Public Service." He had completed a new children's book.

Lucas also was an avid traveler, who visited Valbella, Switzerland; Paris; Madrid; St. Sebastian, Spain; Bologna; Florence; Rome; and his favorite city in the world, Venice.

Lucas is survived by his wife, Beth; children Joel, Jared, Laurel, Benjamin, Julia, and Peter; and grandchildren Lily and Everett.

A memorial will be held at a later time. The family asks that in lieu of flowers people consider a donation to the Domestic Violence Services of Snohomish County.

► from **POLICE BEAT** page 2

ASSAULT

12700 blk. Mukilteo Speedway. A suspect threw a Slurpee on a clerk after being asked for pay for it. The suspect then left the store.

VEHICLE THEFT

11300 blk. Mukilteo Speedway. A vehicle was stolen overnight.

ASSAULT

52nd Pl. W/Harbour Pointe Blvd. SW. A suspect allegedly pointed a firearm at a passing vehicle.

VEHICLE RECOVERY

60th Ave. W/Chennault Beach Dr. A caller alerted police to the location of a stolen vehicle. Police contacted the owner, who retrieved the vehicle.

SEPT. 8

ROBBERY

5000 blk. 82st Pl. SW. The victim said someone beat him up and took his stuff. The suspects allegedly were armed with shotguns and fired one shot. The suspect's vehicle was last seen traveling southbound on SR-525. The victim was treated by the fire department for a small cut on his head.

ASSAULT

12100 blk. Mukilteo Speedway. An employee at a business claimed a transient man assaulted him. Police contacted the suspect, who was cooperative and did not deny the altercation. The man claimed the employee assaulted him first. Police said it was unclear who assaulted whom first. Neither party had any injuries.

PARKING

4900 blk. 81st Pl. SW. A caller complained about several vehicles that had not been moved for weeks. The park ranger responded and marked the tires along with warnings.

SEPT. 7

HARASSMENT

7600 blk. 46th Pl. W. A woman said her brother made threats against her while on the phone. Charges are being referred to the prosecutor's office.

MALICIOUS MISCHIEF

53rd Pl. W. A resident said a sticker was placed over their license plate.

NOISE

10400 blk. 62nd Pl. W. A resident complained about dogs barking.

NUISANCE

8500 blk. Mukilteo Speedway. The manager of a hotel said a homeless man was wandering around the complex and had tried to get in the front door.

VEHICLE THEFT

10500 blk. 59th Ave. W. A truck was stolen.

NUISANCE

8400 blk. Mukilteo Speedway. A caller said a man was throwing rocks and holding a stick in his hand. Police located a man, who ran off toward a wooded area when he saw police.

THEFT

12300 blk. Harbour Pointe Blvd. SW. A vehicle was broken into overnight.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

12400 blk. 52nd Pl. W. A caller reported seeing drug activity in the area.

THEFT

10500 blk. 59th Ave. W. Two vehicles were broken into overnight. Nothing was taken and there was no damage to either vehicle.

SUSPICIOUS

5900 blk. Chennault Beach Dr. A vehicle prowled overnight.

HARASSMENT

4800 blk. Deerfield Pl. A woman said she was receiving harassing phone calls from her mentally ill son.

MALICIOUS MISCHIEF

4200 blk. Russell Rd. A caller reported damage to a building and an attempted theft of a catalytic converter.

VEHICLE RECOVERY

5000 blk. 84th St. SW. A man passed out in a vehicle. When officers contacted him, they discovered the vehicle was listed as stolen. The man was arrested.

LET'S COOK!

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