

Public Policy Report to the Community



THURSTON COUNTY CHAMBER PUBLIC POLICY DIVISION



Your Business & Community Advocate

A message from David Schaffert, Thurston Chamber President/CEO

Thank you for your ongoing investment in the Thurston County Chamber. For 145 years, the Thurston Chamber has championed business and community interests. Back in 2016, the Chamber added resources and expertise to create a more unified and precise approach to public policy and issue management.

Three years later, the Public Policy Division of the Thurston County Chamber stands as your community advocate and provides the skill, acumen, and deep community knowledge and expertise to help business forge more successful relationships and stronger partnerships across public, non-profit, and private entities.

Improving policy, action, and advocacy is a center piece of the Thurston County Chamber's Strategic Plan. I am

pleased with our accomplishments so far, but there is more work to do. We will work to enhance business engagement, develop more effective communications, and leverage technology and social media. We continue to refine how we deliver greater value to the community and our members. Your continued support of the Public Policy Division is appreciated.

The purpose of the Public Policy Division is to ensure that business has a voice at the table to empower your position in critical community decisions. We may fight for one business owner's rights at the local government level, or it may mean working to ensure we represent an entire sector through legal work. Your support means that we can do critical work in our region to ensure individual, business and community success. It takes all of us working together to grow a prosperous economy and vibrant community. Thank you for your support.

– David



David Schaffert
Thurston Chamber President/CEO



Member Advocacy

The Thurston Chamber of Commerce continues to be your champion for business and community interests. With added resources and expertise, we are creating a more unified and precise approach to public policy and issue management.

The Public Policy Division of the Thurston Chamber strives to bring business needs, perspectives, insights, and observations to the public policy discussion and decisions. Sharing our perspectives help balance competing opinions and work to ensure all voices are heard. With your support, the Public Policy Division helps to create a strong, vibrant, and prosperous communities.

The Public Policy Division is your community advocate and provides the skill, acumen, and deep community knowledge and expertise to help forge more successful relationships and stronger partnerships across public, non-profit, and private entities. Today, more than ever, our elected officials need to hear from the business community and Chamber members.

Here is a sample of the issues and projects we successfully supported in 2018 and 2019:

- **Capital Lake EIS Process**
- **Homeless Responses**
- **Housing Crisis**
- **Interstate 5 – Planning**
- **K-12 Education Funding**
- **Lacey – Annexation policy amendments**
- **Olympia – B&O tax amendments**
- **Olympia – Downtown strategies**
- **Tumwater – Land use and development ordinances and zoning**
- **Tumwater – Warehouse distribution center ordinance**
- **Tumwater/Thurston County – Mazama Pocket Gopher Habitat Conservation Planning**
- **Port of Olympia – Vision 2050**
- **Managed numerous Chamber member land use/regulatory issues**



Public policy is determined by those that participate and share their experiences, ideas, and insights as decisions are made. Increasing the Chamber's presence at public hearings and meeting adds value to the debate by creating a pro-business environment and attitude. Chamber members benefit when the public policy division is mobilized and generates positive public support for projects and proposals.

Stay the Course on the Approach to Building Community

Critical to the work of the Public Policy Division is the continued focus on partnerships, process, and projects. We strive to be proactive and continue to refine how and when we engage in critical community discussions. Success is defined by how well we execute on these strategic areas:

Partnerships – Successful partnerships demonstrate collaborative advocacy and shared ownership of outcomes. Key objectives for the Public Policy Division include providing a coordinate and collaborative framework for shared/regional priorities and support for projects that span public, private, and non-profit interests.

Process – Successful involvement in public process will create opportunities for input and public impact that clearly articulate the long-term implications. Key objectives include providing timely and valid expert review and analysis of regulatory and policy activities that impact private sector and business interests.

Projects – Successful projects are prominent and distinct, create new direct jobs, and demonstrate our shared entrepreneurial culture across the region. Key objectives for the Public Policy Division include providing visible and organized advocacy for projects of regional significance.



Decision makers work their best when they hear and understand a diversity of perspectives. The community benefits when the Thurston County Chamber of Commerce is active and visible.

The Public Policy Division helps to bring business perspectives, insights, and observations to the public policy discussion and decisions. Sharing our perspectives help balance competing opinions and work to ensure all voices are heard. With your support, the Public Policy Division helps to create a strong, vibrant, and prosperous communities.

Your Business & Community Advocate

A message from Doug Mah, Director, Thurston Chamber Public Policy Division

It is an honor to work for members of the Thurston County Chamber of Commerce and in the interests of business and our community.

Public policy is determined by those that show up and share their experiences, ideas, and insights as community decisions are made. Increasing the Chamber's collective presence at public hearings and meeting with decision makers adds value to the debate and creates a pro-business environment and attitude.

The Chamber's Public Policy Division seeks opportunities to remind decision makers about the needs, abilities, and the capacity of the private sector to help create vibrant communities. By applying resources, subject matter expertise, and compelling data and analysis, we can influence "game changing" policies and activities around the region.

Increasing Chamber membership participation ensures that we are building awareness, engagement, and insight in our community that best reflect our values and entrepreneurial work ethic. Since the Public Policy Division's inception, we have added tools and techniques that improves and leverages our greatest asset – our members.

I look forward to working with you. The greater Thurston region is a great place to work, grow a business, raise a family, live, and play. You are an important part of the community and I appreciate what you do for us. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

“The Chamber's Public Policy Division seeks opportunities to remind decision makers about the needs, abilities, and the capacity of the private sector to help create vibrant communities.”
-DOUG MAH

– Doug



Doug Mah
Doug Mah & Associates,
Thurston Chamber Public Policy Director



Shared Legislative Agenda

At the heart of the public policy work is the Chamber's coordination of the Thurston County Shared Legislative Agenda. Since 2016, the Chamber has actively advanced regional legislative priorities and projects by convening and working with local governments. The shared agenda operates with some very specific principles and agreements that include:

- Exclusive and unique only to the Thurston County region
- Result in benefits to more than a single member entity
- Demonstrated commitment to member cooperation and collaboration
- Provide for inter-legislative district cooperation and collaboration
- Non-supplanting to individual member requests

In 2019 the Public Policy Division coordinated legislative requests that include:

- **Transportation Budget Request for I-5**

- **Tumwater to DuPont: NEPA/SEPA Review**

- A \$4.5 million request for the next planning phase for the State's most critical corridor. This project builds on our successful 2018 request. **This request was FUNDED.**

- **Capital Budget Request for the Lacey Veterans Services Hub**

- A \$2 million request to renovate the building that provides direct assistance to the region's 32,000 veterans with a unique service delivery model utilizing 51 veteran-centric organizations. **This request was FUNDED.**

- **Capital Budget Request for the SW Washington Regional Agricultural & Innovation Park**

- A \$1.9 million request for site development and construction a building to meet the production and distribution needs of the first tenant(s) of the park. This request builds on our successful 2018 request. **This request was FUNDED.**

- **Capital Budget Request for First Responder Regional Training Facility**

- A \$4 million request to construct a shared training facility in Olympia that provides adequate space and technology to train officers in contemporary policing practices. **This request was not funded.**

- **Operating Budget Request to Restore Judicial Impact Fee Funding**

- A \$2.2 million request to offset the impact of State related actions in Thurston County Superior Court. **This request was FUNDED.**

The Shared Legislative Agenda builds on previous efforts to efficiently and effectively build awareness for some of our region's most unique and pressing needs. These projects require State investment because they exceed local capacity. These requests provide multiple and broad benefits to the entire region and, in the case of Interstate 5, the entire State.

Working Waterfront Coalition

In 2018 the Thurston County Chamber of Commerce's Public Policy Division formed the Working Waterfront Coalition. The approach and intent are straightforward: inform and build community awareness, create stronger public support for the waterfront, and help minimize community concerns prior to, during, and after development in and around the waterfront and downtown Olympia. Last year, efforts resulted in stronger community partnerships to support a pro-active and long-term engagement in the Deschutes Watershed and Budd Inlet portion of South Puget Sound. Highlights over the last 12 months include:

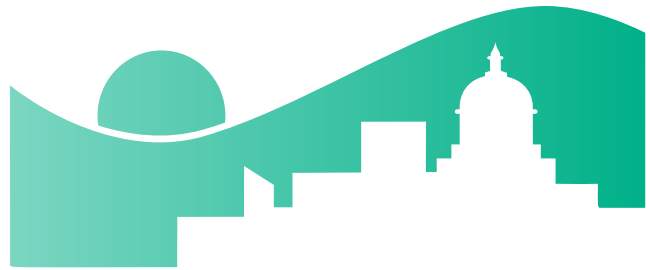
- Improving and enhancing the relationship with regulatory agencies, including the State Department of Enterprise Services as part of the agency's development of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Capitol Lake.
- Establishing a policy position by providing questions and comments in response to the Scoping Phase of the Capitol Lake EIS.
- Chamber representation on the Community Sounding Board for the Capitol Lake EIS.
- Establishing a policy position by providing comments and questions to the City of Olympia, Port of Olympia and LOTT regarding Sea Level Rise mitigation planning.
- Chamber representation on the Port of Olympia's Vision 2050 planning committee.
- Publishing 12 separate articles and editorials in the Chamber's VOICE concerning the waterfront and downtown businesses.

These activities help build and maintain stronger relationships with relevant Federal, State, and Local government decision makers that can foster better partnerships for our community. Chamber representation at official and informal meetings concerning waterfront planning and action items helps provide organizational presence and a framework to mobilize a growing coalition of interested individuals, business entities, and organizations - when needed and determined by the public process.

By highlighting downtown Olympia and waterfront businesses in the monthly VOICE magazine, we leverage our most important resource: Chamber Members. They will strong advocates and help us advance a regional vision that protects and encourages private sector investment in the greater waterfront as a working and commerce-oriented area.



THURSTON COUNTY CHAMBER
PUBLIC POLICY DIVISION



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