



CITY OF PORT ORCHARD

Mayor

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January 4, 2019

RE: A Message from the Mayor regarding the 2018 Tornado Event

On December 18, 2018 an EF-2 Category Tornado touched down in Port Orchard, something I would have never imagined happening in our community. First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all the first responders who rushed onto the scene of something that I don't believe was in anyone's playbook. The cooperation and collaboration I witnessed between multiple jurisdictions and agencies that first day and night was magnificent.

Late that night when I left the scene, the entire Bethel Corridor was dark; search and rescue crews were still searching the neighborhoods for victims and Puget Sound Energy (PSE) and Cascade Natural Gas (CNG) crews were working at a feverous pace to clear fallen trees and downed power lines from the main roads and secure gas leaks. The next morning, I returned to find that PSE and CNG had worked throughout the night clearing our roadways, securing gas mains and services and restored power to the Bethel Corridor. After a morning situation assessment meeting, City and County Engineering and Building Officials were paired in teams with first responders, as well as representatives from Puget Sound Energy and Cascade Natural Gas. These teams performed the initial inspections of the over 400 homes impacted by the tornado, determining if power and gas service could be restored to individual homes and if the homes were safe to be occupied. Because the number of impacted structures within the City was far fewer than the County, our inspectors completed their work by 2 PM that day. Ignoring jurisdictional boundaries, City inspection teams continued to work well into the evening helping ensure that all the potentially effected homes were inspected that next day.

As I continue to reflect on the first 48 hours of this destructive and tragic event, I still can't believe we had no loss of life or serious injuries. I don't want to minimize the impact the tornado has and will continue to have on the families in our community, but with all the falling trees and flying debris its truly a miracle that no lives were lost.

As we enter the recovery phase I continue to be impressed by the outpouring of support and volunteerism displayed by our community; neighbors helping neighbors and strangers stepping forward in our time of need. To date more than \$150,000 corporate and personal donations have been contributed. Just today PSE paid \$50,000 to remove four dangerous trees that were precariously hanging over homes. Kitsap Credit Union has donated \$10,000 to shelter individuals and families displaced by the disaster and the list goes on. Even with this outpouring of support, more volunteers and resources are needed on the long road to recovery. Individuals that wish to volunteer should register at the Community Recovery Center at Christian Life Church and those that wish to make a financial contribution should do so to established organizations like the Red Cross, United Way or South Kitsap Help Line who all have established dedicated funds for the Port Orchard Tornado effort.

In closing I wish to express the great pride I have in our community's ability to deal with the adversity that has fallen upon us. While the recovery efforts haven't been flawless, we've used this event as an opportunity to learn. The missteps related to volunteer coordination and quickly deploying donations will make us better prepared for the next event. So, let's focus on what we've achieved in the wake of this tragic event, continue to help our neighbors in their time of need, and complete what remains to be done to rebuild our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. Putaansuu', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert Putaansuu, Mayor
City of Port Orchard