

# City believes increased state, federal lobbying will pay off

Gordon Thomas hired by the City of Gig Harbor

MARQUES HUNTER  
*of the Gazette*

The City of Gig Harbor has stepped up its pursuit of state and federal funding.

This year, the city council shifted unprecedented funds, up to \$100,000, for stronger advocacy in Olympia during the legislative sessions.

Council gave the city's lobbying contract to Gordon Thomas Honeywell Governmental Affairs (GTH) this year to score money for new projects on a local and regional scale.

This is Gordon Thomas' first year as a client for Gig Harbor. In previous years, it was Smith Alling Lane. The past two years, the city budgeted approximately \$11,000 each year for lobbying services.

Tim Schellberg, the president of GTH and a Gig Harbor resident, was formerly the chief lobbyist for Smith Alling Lane.

Schellberg believes now is the year to make a push to score millions of dollars.

"Because of the hospital and road improvements to Gig Harbor North, we needed a more proactive approach for competing for state and federal dollars to benefit the citizens. There are a lot of issues to deal with on the

horizon," he said.

The additional funds strengthening the 26th District delegation of legislators, GTH is equipping them with pertinent information, putting Gig Harbor in a position to receive grant money that would otherwise eat up taxpayers' dollars.

GTH is primarily responsible for organizing meetings and supplying the local delegation with data. Their top priority is to receive legislative approval of the Curb Grant.

The \$5 million Curb Grant would provide a financial break to the upcoming road infrastructure improvements to Gig Harbor North where heavy traffic increases are anticipated from Costco, YMCA, residential development and St. Anthony's Hospital.

"This year, we have served a resourceful role in developing data that is necessary and telling the delegation what they need," Schellberg said.

Although most of the local representatives are well educated on matters pertinent to the area, Lantz said there has been an increase in teamwork from everybody to get state funding to Gig Harbor.

"They've (GTH) brought the hospital needs front and center," Lantz said. "They are putting all of the projects into better context. For us, we can go to the lobbyist and everyone is on the same page."

Another issue GTH is advocat-

ing strongly this year is the \$10 million buy down of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge tolls. GTH is also interested in keeping a close eye on heritage barn preservation such as Wilkinson Barn. Other projects include lobbying for grant money for Eddon Boat and Westside park.

"A good lobbyist makes good recommendations as to which direction the local delegation should go," Schellberg said.

While landing state money is important for the city, so are federal dollars. The city has never made a strong approach to federal lobbying. Dale Learn, vice president of federal governmental affairs, is the face of Gig Harbor in Washington D.C.

His priorities of interest are the Donkey Creek restoration and the Burnham freeway interchange.

"A lot of these projects I'm lobbying for have a regional benefit," Learn said. His initial job is to determine if they apply for certain projects and then writing up a grant application to various members of congress.

Until last year, Gig Harbor didn't have a presence in Olympia. Council member Derek Young said the hiring of GTH has been like night and day.

"Much of our financial power is granted by the state," he said. "As the city grows, the issue of lobbying has become greater."

Reach reporter Marques Hunter at 853-9221 or by e-mail at [marques.hunter@gazette.com](mailto:marques.hunter@gazette.com)