



## City Manager's Update December 22, 2023



**To:** Fircrest City Council  
**From:** Dawn Masko, City Manager  
**Date:** December 22, 2023  
**Subject:** City Manager's Weekly Update

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### Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers

Below is an overview of upcoming events, meetings, and other items of interest for the City. The update includes reports from City departments on various programs, projects, and achievements.

#### 1. City Hall Offices Closed For Christmas Holiday

City Buildings will be closed on Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, and Monday, December 25<sup>th</sup>, in observance of the Christmas holiday. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays from all of us at the City of Fircrest!

#### 2. Upcoming Meetings – Week of December 25<sup>th</sup> – December 29<sup>th</sup>

- City Council Special Meeting Monday, December 26<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 PM

#### 3. Council Agenda Items – December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023

- Resolution Honoring Councilmember Joe Barrentine
- Resolution – AHBL Contract Extension
- Resolution – DescoAV Contract Extension
- Resolution – Electronic Timesheet Services Agreement

#### 4. Administration

Administration highlights of the past week include:

- City Manager Dawn Masko and Project Coordinator Bob Jean outlined the next steps for the Draft Sewer Transfer Agreement and continued outreach to Pierce County seeking additional information. Meetings are also being coordinated with Pierce County and the City of Tacoma to discuss sewer issues and options.
  - Acting City Clerk Arlette Burkhart attended a Public Records Act legal update webinar hosted by the Washington Attorney General's Office. The webinar covered public record case law decisions issued since April 2023. She also attended a Local Records grant webinar hosted by the Washington State Archives Office. These trainings allow the City Clerk to maintain up-to-date knowledge of current Public Records Act case law.
  - City Manager Masko continued working with City attorneys on various personnel issues.
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- The City Council confirmed City Manager Masko’s appointment of Judge Meagan Foley as the City’s new Municipal Court Judge effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024. Judge Foley will fill the remaining term of retiring Judge John Miller. Judge Foley has served as an active pro-tem judge for Fircrest since July 2022 and was a Court Commissioner for the Pierce County Superior Court for over 30 years. She was awarded the Outstanding Jurist Award in 2019 from the Tacoma-Pierce County Bar Association, which recognizes an exemplary jurist who has significantly served or improved the community. The City of Fircrest is incredibly fortunate to have another outstanding judge presiding over the Fircrest Municipal Court!
- The City’s employee safety committee met this week and discussed phishing emails and the 2024 safety committee work plan. The work plan includes refining employee safety training and promoting employee interest in safety, as well as emergency management procedures.
- The Civil Service Commission will meet on Tuesday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>, and will recertify the lateral police officer eligibility list. Please note that the Civil Service Commission’s regular meeting was changed from January 1<sup>st</sup> due to the New Year’s holiday.
- To date, the City has received 262 public records requests. At the same time last year, the City had processed 220 public records requests.
- In the last 30 days, the City’s website had 9,678 sessions with 24,524 page views from a total of 6,542 users. Sessions are up 20%, and users are up 19% from the previous 30 days.

## 5. Police Department Update

- Fircrest officers responded to 176 calls for service this past week, including 73 traffic stops, which generated 46 notices of infraction. Officers also wrote three parking tickets, issued twelve criminal citations, and conducted four security checks. Officers also responded to various calls, including six vehicle prowls, four suspicious vehicles, two domestic violence calls, and two violations of court orders. Officers had 27 community policing events (foot patrols, citizen assists, security checks, COP activities, welfare checks, and suspicious people and vehicles), worked on four follow-up investigations, and assisted with four outside jurisdiction responses. There was one felony and eleven misdemeanor arrests.
- Vehicle prowls continue to be a problem. We ask that people remove valuables from their vehicles and secure the locks when vehicles are unoccupied.
- The Welcome Sign on Regents Blvd. was the unfortunate victim of a hit-and-run accident on Wednesday night. The driver self-reported to the police following the accident and was cited for hit and run. Public Works staff are preparing estimates for the repair or replacement of the sign. Fortunately, Santa avoided injury and remains unscathed.
- Officers have been delivering holiday baskets and gifts to the seven families identified by Wainwright Intermediate and Whittier Elementary schools, office staff, and our officers. Officers will distribute the remaining food baskets and gifts before Christmas.
- We are continuing to work on background checks for our lateral police candidates. Over the past week, we have received two entry-level police referrals. Moving forward into 2024, we will be exploring the option of adding entry-level officers to fill vacancies.



- Police Chief Ron Schaub participated in the South Sound Regional Training Group meeting this past Wednesday.
- Chief Schaub is working with South Sound 911 to create a more robust statistical report.

## 6. Parks & Recreation

- The Community Center will be closed on December 24<sup>th</sup>, December 25<sup>th</sup>, December 31<sup>st</sup>, and January 1<sup>st</sup> for the Christmas and New Year's holidays.
- Parks & Recreation Director Jeff Grover will be on vacation from December 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>.



Other Parks & Recreation highlights include:

### *Projects*

- Community Center Close-out – Kassel Construction has completed the bulk of the punch list and warranty items to fulfill their contractual obligations outlined in the Community Center construction documents. Staff have been monitoring several trees, and while most have bounced back, there are still concerns about three trees. In past correspondence, Kassel has refused to warranty the trees. Currently, staff are obtaining costs for replacement and will present those costs to Kassel in hopes of achieving completion. If there is still no resolution, other options to rectify the issue will be pursued, depending on contract terms and local regulations.
- Whittier Park Master Plan – The AHBL team conducted a debriefing session following the December 14<sup>th</sup> community meeting. AHBL was pleased with the positive atmosphere, diverse ideas, and meaningful conversations among community members. AHBL and City staff discussed lessons learned from the process to date, and the valuable input received is now being compiled and tabulated. We have received approximately 200 surveys to date, with the survey closing today.

Staff is working collaboratively with AHBL to explore the format for an additional community meeting, considering scenarios where AHBL leads the session or where staff hosts an open house information session based on the information presented at the December 14<sup>th</sup> meeting. Staff are looking at dates in early 2024 for this additional meeting.

Additional information is available on the City [website](#) and the [Whittier Park Master Plan project page](#).

### *Community Events*

- Daddy Daughter Dance – The annual Daddy Daughter Dance - presented by Evergreen Home Loans - The Roffe Team, and Fircrest Parks & Recreation – is scheduled for Friday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024. An approved [RecDesk](#) account is required to purchase tickets. It may take up to 10 business days for approval, so make sure to create an account in advance. Fircrest residents can buy tickets starting Monday, January 8<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM, at a price of \$25 per couple and \$10 for each additional child. Non-residents can buy tickets starting Monday, January 29<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM with a ticket price of \$35 per couple and \$10 for each additional child. The event will take place from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM at the Community Center. Staff will be monitoring event registrations received and will be adjusting capacity based on the number of couple tickets and additional tickets purchased.



- [Lights of Fircrest](#) – Congratulations to the winners of this year's [Lights of Fircrest event](#)! All of the entries were fantastic, and our City certainly looks [Merry](#) and [Bright](#)! Thank you to everyone who participated and to everyone else who took the time to decorate and light the path between entries. Check out the winning entries at this [link](#) on our website.

It's not too late to tour our beautiful neighborhoods filled with holiday cheer. The [Lights of Fircrest](#) map route, including the participant address list and turn-by-turn instructions, is available on our [website](#). For those who prefer using their phones, the Google Maps link is [Lights of Fircrest 2023](#). Printed copies are also available at the Community Center.

These stunning displays are set up in our neighborhoods, creating a fantastic walking or biking experience. We kindly ask everyone to respect the speed limits and drive with caution and care while enjoying the light displays.



### ***Recreation Programs***

- There will be no Tot Story Time during Winter Break from December 19<sup>th</sup> to January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Story Time will resume on January 9<sup>th</sup>. Tot Story Time is typically held on Tuesday mornings at 10:30 AM in the Multipurpose Room at the Community Center.
- [Barre Classes](#) – Barre is a low-impact workout that integrates elements of Pilates, yoga, and ballet through isometric movements. The class commences with a flowing warm-up, focusing on balance, core strength, and upper body exercises. Participants engage in targeted exercise at the barre, addressing both small and large muscle groups, before concluding with stretching, centering, and breathing exercises on the mat. The fee structure includes options for single classes/drop-ins at \$15.00, 2x Barre classes/drop-ins at \$30.00, 3x Barre classes/drop-ins at \$45.00, or a monthly fee of \$60.00.
- [Barre/HIIT Classes](#) – This full-body workout class seamlessly blends strength and cardio exercises. The session kicks off with a 15-minute warm-up, followed by timed intervals that incorporate weights and movements at the barre. Throughout the class, participants engage in exercises targeting balance, core, and both upper and lower body muscles. The fee options include a single class/drop-in for \$15.00, 2x Barre classes/drop-ins for \$30.00, and 3x Barre classes/drop-ins for \$45.00. Participants also have the choice of a monthly fee of \$60.00. The Barre/HIIT class is scheduled every Friday from 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM, starting on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and concluding on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Instructor Patricia Rubke leads this class in the Names Family Foundation Fitness Room.
- [January Senior Trip](#) – Registration is now open for the January Senior Trip happening on Thursday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The [Tour of the State Capitol](#) is a guided tour spanning approximately 50 minutes and will explore notable areas such as the North Foyer, Rotunda, State Reception Room, and Legislative Galleries. Following the tour, enjoy a delightful lunch at Meconi's Italian Subs, with an extra treat from Wagner's European Bakery across the street. Departure time is 9:45 AM from the Community Center, with an expected return time of 3:30 PM. Hurry, as there are only five remaining spots for this trip. The registration fee is \$35.
- Our Weekly Schedules [webpage](#) includes a comprehensive list of activities and programs for all age groups. Information about our adult programming can be found at [Adult Classes & Sports](#), and youth programs can be found on our [Youth Programs](#) webpage.



Please call (253) 564-8177 or visit the City's [Parks and Recreation Department](#) website for events and program information, class registration, facility rentals, questions on Parks & Recreation activities, and volunteer opportunities. Want to know more? Like us on Facebook at "City of Fircrest, Washington."

## **7. Planning & Building Update**

- Community Development (CD) Director Mark Newman is drafting a Customer Service Feedback survey to solicit ideas and feedback from users of our services involving the processing of building permits and land use applications.
- CD Director Newman met with the Department of Commerce to discuss Year 2 grant obligations for the 2024 Comprehensive Plan. The City will be receiving \$62,500 in 2024 to help with Plan adoption.
- Staff have successfully closed out a code enforcement case on the 500 block of Golden Gate Avenue involving an abandoned boat. Code enforcement is now assisting with another case at that location regarding excessive glare/illumination.
- CD Director Newman worked with South Sound Housing Affordability Partners to identify sample Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in the City that exemplify missing middle housing.
- CD Director Newman drafted site plans of a typical Fircrest residential lot to show how new Missing Middle Housing laws will impact neighborhoods in terms of setbacks, density, and form. He will share the site plans with the Planning Commission during the January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024, meeting and again with the City Council during the February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024, study session. The public is encouraged to attend.
- CD Director Newman assisted Project Coordinator Bob Jean with GIS mapping of sewer utilities in the northwest corner of the City along S. 19<sup>th</sup> and Mildred Streets.
- CD Director Newman is also working with the Department of Fish & Wildlife staff for a review of the existing critical areas ordinance to make sure it complies with the most current regulations.
- There were 30 code enforcement cases opened in 2023. Permit Coordinator/Code Enforcement Officer Kristin Rosario is reviewing cases to close out cases that have been resolved.
- Permit Coordinator Rosario has issued over 160 permits in 2023.
- Are you thinking of a home renovation project? Please be advised that the City of Fircrest will be adopting the 2021 building code on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024, as required by the State. This code will change building code regulations, which will increase energy efficiency requirements for construction projects. Any permits submitted on or after March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024, will be required to use the 2021 code. Staff is preparing to present an Ordinance to the Council in February 2024 to explain more about the 2021 updates.

## **8. Public Works Update**

Public Works is operating under winter hours from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM.

Highlights include: (in addition to routine daily tasks)

### ***Utilities – Water, Sewer, Streets, and Stormwater***

- Citywide sweeping is now caught up following the remaining "fall" of Fall. The sweeper is going in for routine maintenance after the first of the year and is slated to be out of service for a few weeks.
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- A complete inspection of the old bucket truck was conducted in preparation for selling it. Dielectric testing is tentatively scheduled for the week of December 25<sup>th</sup>, weather dependent.

***Maintenance – Parks & Facilities***

- Staff utilized the new Bucket Truck to trim the hedges at the Public Works Building, Contra Costa Lift Station, and the Public Safety Building.

***Project Updates***

- Well #7 (Claremont)
  - We received the structural assessment report and recommendation for repairs. We are awaiting repair estimates to present to the insurance company.
- Fircrest Park Maintenance Facility Structure Upgrade
  - We are awaiting construction estimates to present to the City Manager.
- 44<sup>th</sup> Street West & 67<sup>th</sup> Ave West Lift Station Upgrade
  - The Council approved the Pape & Sons construction contract on December 12<sup>th</sup>.
  - We are providing a Notice to Proceed and identifying dates for preconstruction meetings.
- Storm Water Pre-Treatment Outfall Grant Project – Emerson Street & Estate Place
  - Final close-out Progress Reports and Payment Requests are in progress.
- Emerson Street Sidewalk Extension (south side) – Woodside Drive to 67<sup>th</sup> Ave West
  - The Council approved the engineering design contract on December 12<sup>th</sup>.
- AMI Water Meter Exchange Program
  - Program completion is at 49%. Exchanges are on hold due to inclement weather response efforts.

TOTAL BY YEAR	
2019	11
2020	143
2021	444
2022	283
2023 YTD	295

PROJECT UPDATE	
Total City Meter Connections	2,402
New Meters Installed	1,176
Remaining Meters to be Installed	1,226
<b>Percentage of Completion</b>	<b>49%</b>

- Claremont Street Grind & Overlay TIB Grant
    - The City was awarded a Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) grant in the amount of \$677,409 for the Claremont Street Overlay project. The City’s local grant match requirement is \$124,543.
    - Grant agreement documents will be brought forward to the Council for acceptance on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
  - Regents Blvd (west) Grind & Overlay – Alameda Ave to 67<sup>th</sup> Ave West
    - We are communicating with PSRC and WSDOT regarding the funding shortfall.
  - South Orchard Street Grind & Overlay – TIB Grant Funded
    - Design is in process for construction in 2024.
    - City of Tacoma staff are identifying funds for this project.
    - Fircrest engineering consultants are coordinating with Tacoma engineering staff.
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- Electron and Contra Costa Intersection Improvement – Legislative Funds
  - We received a \$153,000 appropriation of funds from the State Legislature.
  - We received notification from the Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) that this project is clear to move forward without any further action by DAHP.

## **9. Port of Tacoma Maritime Center Project**

The Port of Tacoma is starting the design and site master planning process for the new Port Maritime Center campus and is seeking Pierce County resident’s input. They are conducting an online open house to provide information on the project and seek Pierce County resident’s input. A project overview and the survey link can be accessed on the Port of Tacoma [Project Overview | Port Maritime Center](#) website.

## **10. Fircrest Parks and Rec Foundation**

The Fircrest Parks and Rec Foundation’s mission is to “preserve and enhance the quality of Fircrest parks and recreation facilities and programming with a focus on community, livability and equity.” As the year is quickly coming to an end, consider making a difference in our beautiful community by contributing to this local non-profit organization. Donations will help the Foundation continue to enhance Fircrest parks, support local events, and create lasting memories for our residents. More information about the Fircrest Parks and Recreation Foundation can be found on their website [Fircrest Parks & Recreation Foundation \(fircrestforever.com\)](#).

## **11. Tacoma Public Residential Incentives**

Insulation – Upgrading your insulation can make your home more energy-efficient and comfortable. It can also save you money. If your home has electric heat, upgrading to current insulation standards could reduce your utility bills significantly for years to come. Properly installed insulation helps stop cold air drafts, holds heat inside, and reduces outside noise. Tacoma Public Utilities is offering two incentives ranging from \$500 to \$1,500 to help you pay for upgrading the insulation in your crawlspace, walls, and attic. In order to get the most value from insulation and air sealing, it must be installed correctly, in the right location, and without leaving gaps that reduce the performance of the insulation. Terms and conditions can be found at [Insulation - Tacoma Public Utilities \(mytpu.org\)](#).

Duct Sealing Rebate – Leaky air ducts in your heating and cooling system can be a major cause of energy loss in your home. On average, about 25% of your heated or cooled air leaks out into improperly sealed ducts and into crawlspaces, attics, and garages. When air ducts leak, your heating and cooling system must work harder to keep your home comfortable, which means higher utility bills, wasted energy, and greater wear and tear on your equipment. Since ductwork is often located out of sight in attics and crawlspaces, you may be unaware of this energy loss. Properly sealing air ducts also keeps them cleaner, which improves indoor air quality and reduces the amount of dust that blows out of the vents and into your home. Tacoma Public Utilities is offering a \$450 duct sealing rebate for residential properties up to four units per building and a \$250 rebate for manufactured homes. Visit [Duct Sealing - Tacoma Public Utilities \(mytpu.org\)](#) for more details.

## **12. Toll Rate Adjustments Public Comment**

The Washington State Transportation Commission is proposing changes to increase the toll rates. Share your thoughts on proposed toll rate adjustments for the I-405 Express Toll Lanes and SR 167 High Occupancy (HOT) lanes. You can learn more about the process and provide public comment on their [website](#) until January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024.

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### **13. School District Winter Break**

Both Tacoma Public Schools and the University Place School District students are on winter break. Students return to school on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024.

### **14. 28<sup>th</sup> Legislative District Community Meetings**

Representatives Mari Leavitt and Dan Bronoske from the 28<sup>th</sup> Legislative District are hosting a pre-legislative session town hall meeting in Fircrest on Thursday, January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024, from 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM at the Roy H. Murphy Community Center, located at 555 Contra Costa Avenue.

Town Hall questions can be sent in advance at this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MHFVJLJ>.

### **15. Honoring Former Humane Society Director**

Following the recent passing of the former executive director for the Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County, Jeanne Werner-Spaulling is being remembered as a remarkable, visionary leader who had a profound impact on the field of animal welfare. She retired in 2000 from the Humane Society after serving 15 years as their executive director. She previously served as Washington State's inaugural director of humane education. She spent her 35-year career dedicated to improving the lives of animals and fostering a compassionate community.

Jeanne was a trailblazer who earned numerous awards for exceptional contributions to animal welfare. She was one of the first female officers to serve not only on the national board of directors of her field but also as the board chair. Following her retirement, she continued to volunteer her time and served as a long-time member of the Tapco Credit Union Board of Directors.

I am taking an editorial license to talk about Jeanne personally because I was privileged to have known her for many years. I was fortunate to have met her early in my career. Jeanne surrounded herself with other local female executives, and it was inspiring as a young female manager to have her as a role model. As the years went on, I was blessed to become her friend and continued to seek out her wisdom. It is comforting to know that while she is no longer with us, her legacy lives on not only in Pierce County but across the country.

For those interested, a tribute to Jeanne Werner-Spaulling is on the Humane Society's [website](#).

### **16. Small Business Security Grant Program**

The Pierce County Council approved an Ordinance establishing a Small Business Strengthening and Security Grant Program to increase the viability and security of small businesses in unincorporated Pierce County and its small cities or towns with a population of less than 8,000. The Pierce County Executive must now sign the ordinance before the program commences.

Under the program, eligible small businesses in Pierce County can apply for the reimbursement of 50% of eligible costs, up to a maximum of \$10,000 grant reimbursement. Eligible expenses include any capital purchase, such as equipment, appliances, furniture, or the cost of facility improvements or expansion. In response to recent business concerns about security, the program also specifically highlights potential capital expenditures related to improving security, such as lighting, alarms, cameras, secure entrance doors, bollards, fencing, or other devices. This is a matching grant program, meaning the cost must be matched by an equal amount from the business. Eligible businesses must have been operating for at least two years and not have more than 20 full-time employees. More information will be available pending approval by the Pierce County Executive.

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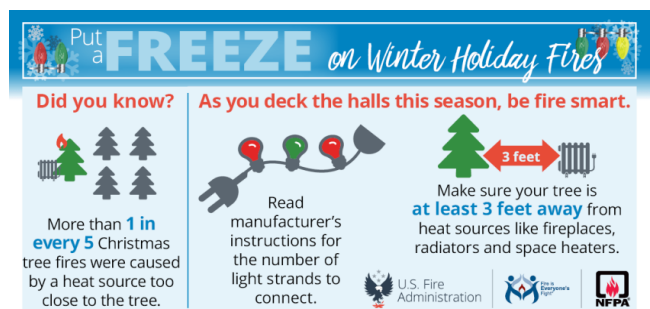
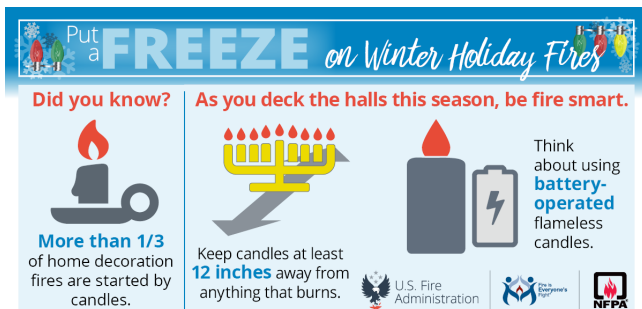


## 17. 'Tis the Season to Be Safe - Winter & Holiday Safety Tips

Between cold weather and the holiday season, winter can be a dangerous time of year in terms of home fires. According to the [U.S. Fire Administration](#), the top three days of the year for fires started by candles are Christmas Day, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day. Consider using flameless, battery-operated candles, which can look, smell, and feel like a real candle. These battery-operated candles can also be beneficial during a power outage.

Other safety tips to keep in mind this holiday season:

- Never leave a burning candle unattended.
- Turn off tree lights, decorations, and portable space heaters when away or asleep.
- Keep lighters, matches, cooking surfaces, and candles out of reach of children and pets.
- Only use decorations that are not flammable.
- Never throw wrapping paper in the fireplace.
- Only use indoor lights indoors and outdoor lights outdoors.
- Check holiday lights each year for frayed wires, loose connections, or excessive wear.
- Don't overload circuits, extension cords, or electrical sockets.
- Don't link more than three strands of holiday lights per single extension cord.
- Never leave cooking or baking unattended.
- Keep holiday plants away from pets, including poinsettias, mistletoe, amaryllis, and holly.
- If using an artificial tree, check that it is labeled "fire resistant."
- Water your live Christmas tree daily to keep it from becoming dry.
- Keep your Christmas tree at least 3 feet away from heat sources and room exits.
- Maintain woodburning fireplaces and chimneys and place a screen in front of fireplaces.
- Maintain a "kid-free zone" around open fires, space heaters, and fireplaces.
- Clear pathways of trip hazards like clutter, power cords, or extra furniture to prevent falls.
- Clear driveways and walkways of snow and ice.
- Check your smoke detector batteries.
- **Don't drink and drive.** Use a designated driver or rideshare app.
- Travel safely, and don't overshare on social media.
- If you're going away for the holidays, protect your home by making it seem like you're home.
- Have a fire escape plan and practice it. Be prepared before a fire starts.



**Remember – the best gift you can give your family is YOU! Please be safe.**

## 18. Senior/Disabled Property Tax Exemptions

The Pierce County Assessor-Treasurer office recently announced updated household income limits to qualify for the senior/disabled property tax exemption in 2024. The maximum household income limit is increasing to \$64,000 per year (based on 2023 income). Those with incomes under \$55,000 and \$46,000 will see even greater property tax reductions. To begin receiving this tax reduction, you must apply to the Pierce County Assessor-Treasurer and supply all required information.

Applications should be submitted online using a fillable form with scanned attachments. You can apply as soon as you've received proof of your 2023 total income. Proof includes year-end statements, 1099s for all forms of income, and your 2023 federal income tax return if filed. The online application and additional information are available at [Senior Citizen/Persons with Disabilities Exemption from Real Property Taxes](#).

## 19. TCC Foundation Scholarships

Current Tacoma Community College (TCC) students, high school seniors, and everyone else who intends to study at TCC during the 2024-25 academic year are invited to apply for TCC Foundation Scholarships during the application period of January 1 – March 31, 2024. Find the application and the schedule of online workshops designed to help with the application process at [tacomacc.edu/scholarships](http://tacomacc.edu/scholarships).

