



ANDREI PUNGOVSCHI Getty Images

How a manosphere star accused of rape and trafficking was freed.

In today's paper

**WEEKEND:**  
Comedy, museum, shopping, and more. 1B



LAURIE MOTT Courtesy

# The Olympian

## Olympia tenant protections advance: What's next for renters?

BY TY VINSON  
[tvinson@theolympian.com](mailto:tvinson@theolympian.com)

The Olympia City Council voted 6-1 in favor of forwarding a slew of tenant protections aimed at making Olympia's housing stock more accessible onto second and final reading Jan. 6. If approved, the new requirements would go into effect on April 1, 2026.

Housing Program Specialist

Christa Lenssen told The Olympian there won't be a public hearing at the Jan. 6 meeting.

During the council's Dec. 16 meeting, Lenssen said the city received 283 responses to its fall community survey on specific tenant screening policies that were being proposed.

She said 84% of the 160 landlords who responded reported that they verify applicants' income. On the other side, renters were asked about reasons that

their rental applications were rejected, and 55% reported it was because their income or another member of their household's income was too low.

"Currently, over half of renting households in Olympia are housing cost burdened, which means they pay over 1/3 of their income in rent, considering many landlords use a three to one income to rent ratio," Lenssen said. "Currently, over half of Olympia renter households may



STEVE BLOOM [sbloom@theolympian.com](mailto:sbloom@theolympian.com)

The City of Olympia will close its customer service counters early on Friday, Dec. 22, 2023.

not qualify if they apply to rent using this standard ratio."

Lenssen said according to the National Low Income Housing

Coalition, the fair market rent for a one-bedroom unit in Olym-

**SEE RENTERS, 4A**



MARTIN BILBAO The Olympian

A driver approaches a green payment drop off box outside The Atrium, Thurston County's administrative headquarters, on Sept. 19, 2025. Property tax payments may be submitted by mail, in-person at the Treasurer's Office in The Atrium or at this drop off box. The Atrium is located at 3000 Pacific Avenue SE in Olympia.

## 'Shocked': Thurston County passes \$1B budget with 3-2 vote

BY MARTÍN BILBAO  
[mbilbao@theolympian.com](mailto:mbilbao@theolympian.com)

Thurston County commissioners narrowly adopted a new biennial budget with substantial spending cuts Tuesday.

The \$1 billion budget for 2026-2027 passed with a contentious 3-2 vote at The Atrium, the county's administrative headquarters in Olympia.

The budget vote and surrounding discussion highlighted divisions on the board. Commissioners Rachel Grant and Emily Clouse both voted against approving the operating and capital budgets, citing concerns with the budget building process and public transparency. Their three seatmates pushed back on those concerns and passed the budget over their objections.

"I've never seen a commis-

sioner not vote on the budget," Commissioner and Board Chair Tye Menser said. "I would say I'm disappointed, but I think I would say I'm shocked. Frankly, I think it's incredibly irresponsible."

The board would have no authority to spend any money next year if the budget vote failed, Budget Manager Summer Miller told the board. County Manager Leonard Hernandez stressed the impact of this outcome.

"Summer spoke to our Prosecuting Attorney's Office, and it's clear that things come to a grinding halt," Hernandez said. "If there is no budget, there is no authority for any department or official to spend money in the county and our activity stops, everything."

County leadership initially estimated a \$36 million general fund deficit earlier this year.

Through a variety of cost saving decisions, the board brought down the deficit to about \$9.8 million.

The general fund is the county's primary operating purse. This fund is budgeted at about \$148 million for 2026 and \$145 million in 2027, according to the preliminary budget book.

Cuts to this fund are expected to cause delays and reductions across a swath of public services, including in some of the county's law and justice offices, officials have warned.

As part of this budget, the board also decided to shift millions in county road property tax levy proceeds to the general fund. This action is expected to hamper the county's ability to maintain and improve county roads in the years to come, officials have said.

### COMMISSIONERS GRANT, CLOUSE EXPLAIN THEIR VOTES

Before the vote, Grant said she had not received basic budget reports that she needed to make an informed decision.

She said she could not "in good conscience" support the budget without this information, especially in light of cuts to the public safety and court operations.

"Local government budgeting requires transparency, a demonstrably balanced budget, clear fund accounting, documented revenue assumptions and the ability for both the commissioners and the public to understand what's being funded and why," Grant said. "Those basic principles have not been met."

She clarified that her vote

**SEE BUDGET, 4A**

## Storm knocks out power for thousands in Thurston County

BY MARTÍN BILBAO  
[mbilbao@theolympian.com](mailto:mbilbao@theolympian.com)

Stormy weather knocked out power for thousands of Thurston County residents Wednesday morning, prompting many schools to close.

The wider Thurston County region had over 200 outages as of 8:15 a.m. Wednesday, according to Puget Sound Energy. It showed more than 630 total outages and 135,500 customers affected across PSE's service area in Western Washington.

The outages occurred amid heavy rain and strong winds, the third such weather event in just over a week, per a 6 a.m. PSE alert. Damages appeared spread throughout the Puget Sound, however PSE says Thurston, Pierce, Island and Skagit counties were the most impacted. Find Energy, a private website that collects data from electric utilities, estimated about 29,000 Thurston County customers were without power at 9 a.m.

PSE reported 25,000 Thurston County customers had no power in a noon update. Crews restored power to more than 61% of customers across the PSE service area by about 3:30 p.m. In Thurston and Pierce Counties, crews had fixed three of nine damaged transmission segments.

Crews were assessing the extent of the damage in the afternoon. Earlier in the day, PSE said additional crews from outside the region were supporting local crews as they work "around the clock" to restore power as safely as possible.

"We started damage assessment early this morning in areas where it was safe for our teams to be in the field," the noon PSE update said. "We will set estimated restoration times once we have an initial assessment of damage."

A flood watch remained in effect through 4 p.m. Thursday, according to the National Weather Service. A high wind warning expired at 10 a.m. Wednesday.

All the rainfall has saturated

**SEE STORM, 2A**



We're dedicated to delivering the journalism you rely on. Discover the stories that matter to you inside. Subscribers, explore more stories and features like puzzles and games at [theolympian.com/edition](http://theolympian.com/edition).

**FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE QUESTIONS, CALL US AT:**  
800-905-0296



0 40901 06201 1