

Hammond man to challenge Balensifer for mayor's post

BY CINDY YINGST
The Columbia Press

Henry Balensifer will have some competition in his race for Warrenton mayor.

Retired commercial truck driver John Washington, 54, of Hammond has filed for the post, which will be decided in the Nov. 6 election.

Balensifer, who was 23 when first elected to the City Commission in 2012, was appointed to the mayor's post by fellow commissioners last year when then-Mayor Mark Kujala stepped down.

Washington said he first got interested in local politics when the city placed a moratorium on marijuana dispensaries and then relegated them south of Highway 101 after voters approved legalizing the drug.

"Astoria doesn't need money for their schools. Seaside doesn't need money for their schools," Washington said. "But in Warrenton, the city council made it their job to say no to marijuana stores in town. ... I don't think it should have been up to the city council and mayor. It should have been put to a vote of the citizens."

Washington, who has lived in Hammond for 18 years, has no beef with Balensifer.

"Not one," he said. "But I see no reason to come in second place. I've always been an overachiever. If I'm going to do it, I'm going to do it all."

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Left: Warrenton Grade School teacher Mindy Little leads sign-language students in "Proud to be an American" below the just-unveiled veterans statue. **Above:** About 200 people attended Saturday's monument dedication. **Below:** VFW Auxiliary President Debbie Little presents the monument's history while state Sen. Betsy Johnson looks on.

Vets statue dedicated

A celebration honoring veterans and unveiling a statue three decades in the making brought people downtown Saturday.

The 13-foot bronze figure was dedicated as the

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Photos by Peggy Yingst/The Columbia Press

New detective named to Warrenton Police Department

The Columbia Press

Warrenton's new police detective hit the ground running.

On July 25, the first day of Tyler Johnston's new assignment, he was diverted to help with an officer-involved shooting in Seaside, Police Chief Matt Workman told the City Commission.

"There's a lot of variety," Johnston said. "Since I started, I don't think I've had a dull moment."

The detective, who has been with the department since April 2015, was introduced Tuesday night.

The new position was made possible through an increase commissioners ap-

proved in the police budget for the 2018-19 fiscal year. Johnston's contract is for three years with the option of renewing.

"He's one of these guys that's just thirsty for knowledge," Workman said. "He's our go-to guy for electronic evidence, search warrants, preservation of evidence."

Johnston has specialized training in child-abuse investigations, sex-offender interviewing, child and infant death investigations, use-of-force documentation, school safety and active shooter scenarios, and social media investigations.

He has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Western Oregon University.



Cindy Yingst/The Columbia Press

Police Chief Matt Workman introduces Detective Tyler Johnston to the City Commission Tuesday night.