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Talking with Grant Degginger, mayor of Bellevue

In Person

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Grant Degginger, the chair of the construction litigation practice group at Seattle-based law firm Lane Powell PC, has also served as a member of the Bellevue City Council since 1999. In 2006, his fellow council members selected him as mayor. He also chairs the Cascade Water Alliance, which is securing water supplies for a group of cities in east and south King County.

On how his experience as an attorney helps him on the City Council: One of the things that litigators do is assimilate a lot of information quickly, and that's what council members do as well.

On the city of Bellevue's decision to extend domestic partnership benefits after it was threatened with a lawsuit: It was something the city was studying, but the lawsuit gave it some additional attention and provided an incentive to get that work done sooner. It's the right thing to do because we value all of our employees, and we're in a competitive employment environment. If we don't provide benefits, we risk losing valuable employees.

On whether Bellevue and Seattle are in competition for business: I don't view it as competition -- we're part of a region, and when the region is healthy and successful, we'll be healthy and successful.

On the oft-repeated statement that half the construction cranes west of the Mississippi are located in Bellevue: I think there are some urban legends out there, but I believe we've got about 15 cranes in the sky. It's certainly an amazing time in the city's history to have the skyline changing daily.

On the *raison d'être* of the Cascade Water Alliance: It includes eight cities and water districts with over 300,000 customers, including 22,000 businesses. Our view was water is another essential piece of infrastructure, like roads and transportation. If we didn't start taking action now, we might face the same crisis with water that we face with transportation.

On the sources of water: It's a plan that involved seeking multiple sources of water. (The alliance) has a plan with Seattle Public Utilities for a 50-year contract for a fixed amount of water, which is fixed until 2024 then begins to decline. We entered into agreement with

Tacoma, going to start construction in the fall. We're acquiring Lake Tapps as another long-term source of supply.

On the status of the Lake Tapps deal: Agreements on the lake are expected to be finalized this year. We've worked very closely with the two tribes, the Muckleshoots and Puyallups, to reach a flow regime for the White River. We're still working it out with the homeowners.

On his family: I'm married. My wife is an attorney by training who spent 18 years in the Washington Attorney General's office. And I have two children, a son who's 19 and goes to the University of Maryland, and one in high school who is starting the ninth grade.

On balancing family, work and government: I couldn't do this if they (my family) weren't supportive. My oldest played baseball through high school, and I didn't miss too many games. The youngest plays soccer and lacrosse, and I try to get to his events. As long as they're not playing on Monday nights, because I don't miss council meetings.

On whether civic service is inherited: My oldest was the president of his senior class in high school, and my younger one was involved in leadership at his middle school last year. I was president of my senior class in Mercer Island High School, back when the Earth was still cooling.

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