

Neighborhood News

A NEWSLETTER FOR BELLINGHAM NEIGHBORHOODS

A letter from Mayor Dan Pike

During recent weeks the City has implemented steps to address declining revenues as a result of continued local and nationwide economic difficulties. Updated revenue figures indicate that the downward trend is occurring at an even more rapid rate than previously predicted. Recent sales tax preliminary numbers, based on November's retail activity, show receipts for that month down by as much as 16% from a year ago.

The proactive steps we took in 2008 to soften the effects of these declining revenues were substantial; however, we recently implemented a strategy to reduce our workforce, resulting in lay-offs for five city staff. The emotional impacts of this action are felt by the entire city team and we are doing everything possible to avoid further staff reductions. It remains to be seen whether that will be possible.

While we are doing all we can to maintain quality public services and protect people's jobs, each increment of declining revenue brings new challenges. As such, we have identified that discontinuing the *Neighborhood News*, at least for 2009, is a necessary cost-savings step. While you will not see the newsletter in future months, we will continue to communicate with neighborhoods through our established and effective connections with neighborhood associations and maintain our commitment to posting current, accurate and emerging information on the city website.

There is a process in motion to review current department budgets and decide where further cuts might be made. A set of recommendations will be brought to the City Council in the

coming months and a new official budget may result, that will act as our spending plan for the duration of 2009. In any event, there will be shifts in staffing and services; however, we are taking great care to minimize any impact on service provision.

During times like this it can be difficult to dissect speculation about the city's financial state and potential next steps. We are making it a priority to provide accurate information related to what is an ever-changing financial climate, communicate frequently about steps being implemented, and remain consistently accessible to answer questions and provide information.

I want to express my gratitude to city employees, who care so much about the services they provide to the public and care about each other. Neighborhoods and neighborhood associations are similarly committed to our community and to making our city the best it can be, even during times of austerity. This dedication is among the many qualities that make the City of Bellingham known for its good people and top-quality services.



Dan Pike
Mayor of Bellingham