

September 9, 2004

**RE: Large Community Hall as part of the Waterfront
Redevelopment with supporting rationale and petitions**

Dear Members of the Waterfront Futures Group, Port of Bellingham, and
City of Bellingham Planning Commission:

Over the last several years, I have attempted to find a suitable hall for a large social dance held each year in Bellingham, as well as a facility for a recurring community auction and dinner. I have discovered that our city has a number of smaller community halls; but little in the 4,500 to 6,000 square foot range – particularly suitable for dance. I suspect that there are a number of others who have encountered the same problem as I in finding facilities in Bellingham and Whatcom County.

Our beautiful City and the Port of Bellingham are embarking on an endeavor to revitalize, plan for, and redevelop the waterfront over the next 10-20 years. It seems an appropriate place to include a large, attractive community hall with wood floors. However, when I attended this summer's Open House at the Ferry Terminal, I was told there were no plans for a community hall as part of this massive project.

In an effort to assess the interest of the larger community in such a proposal, I prepared a petition and rationale for the proposal. The ink signatures were obtained last Monday afternoon over a 45 minute period at the new Taylor Street Dock and at a recent social dance class. Online signatures were obtained starting with my own meager mailbox on September 2nd. Thus far, I have encountered a number of community members who have had the same frustration in finding a suitable facility for their event.

I have attached my 1) rationale for this request, 2) survey of facilities/community halls in Bellingham and Whatcom County – both public and private, and 3) petitions,

It seems a natural to consider such a facility as part of the redevelopment plan for the Bellingham waterfront – a keen reflection of the harmony and communal ethos (disposition, character and fundamental values) the Waterfront Futures Group is looking to achieve.

Marcia Robey
Bellingham, Washington
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Enc: Rationale, survey, petitions

RATIONALE FOR REQUESTING WATERFRONT COMMUNITY HALL
September 9, 2004

We propose that a 4,500-6,000 square foot community hall with sprung wood floors¹ be included in the redevelopment plans for the Bellingham Waterfront. Our city lacks a hall of this function and size.

From the Bellingham Waterfront Futures Group website:

"Urban waterfronts are important and special assets and that, when redeveloped, often contribute to healthy traditional communities. Waterfronts can serve as a unifying force in a city or town and can be, and often are, a force for community enrichment. Further, vibrant communities are essential for environmental, economic and social advancement."

The Waterfront Center

"...make the wisest and best long-term uses of waterfront resources for maximum public benefit."

The Waterfront Center

A recent search of Whatcom County private and public facilities for a large community hall with wood floors found.....nothing! Bellingham high school seniors looking for a suitable venue for their proms are left with meager choices: their cavernous high school gym, a site too small, or a pricey hotel. Bellingham and Whatcom County boasts a number of very active non-profit social dance groups. These energetic and lively community groups bring musicians and visitors to our community from as far away as Vancouver, B.C. and Portland. Presently, local weekly dance classes and small dances are held at smaller facilities such as the Fairhaven Library Auditorium. However, larger dances present more of a dilemma. There is a distinct lack of adequate facilities to host dances for large numbers of participants. While there are certainly private facilities in the 4,500-6,000 square foot range in Bellingham, the flooring is not suitable for social dance. The only facilities big enough to hold dances for over 75 dancers are the local middle or high school gyms. Regrettably, the gyms are *too* large and cavernous, lack ambiance, have poor acoustics, do not have kitchen facilities, have a gymnasium feel, have shoe sole restrictions, and in most cases, have wood floors **set on concrete**. (Please see survey below for specifics.) The smaller public

¹ A "sprung" floor provides resiliency to the dancers which is not provided by other surfaces. Tongue and groove hardwood (maple or oak) are best for durability and comfort to the dancing feet and legs. Wood is laid over a base of plywood and the plywood is laid over a variety of wood furring strips.

facilities are at a premium as Bellingham continues to grow, and are inadequate in any event.

A large community hall would serve the robust dance community and offer additional *year round* uses for the general community, such as a special site for wedding receptions, proms, concerts, exhibits, group meetings, seminars, auctions, and a myriad of other community events. Other community halls in similar cities are rented on a continual basis by dance, youth and general activity groups. A suitable facility will allow local groups to host larger events bringing participants from the entire northwest region.

The City of Vancouver, Washington, is similar in size to Bellingham with a population of 379,000 in the county and 143,560 residing in the city. This city is building a new, large community center including a 3,400 square foot community room with wood floors. Vancouver already has the Luepke Senior Center, owned and operated by the City, with a 4,212 square foot hall with hardwood floors. In addition, Vancouver has two more community centers – the Marshall Community Center and the Jim Parsley Center (see attachments concerning Clark County/Vancouver, Washington).

The Town of Steilacoom, a residential community of 6,050, uses their community center for recreational activities, social services, cultural programs, educational classes and special events for Steilacoom residents including before and after school youth programs, summer camps, gymnastics, teen band nights, martial arts, cheerleading clinics and scouting programs. In addition, they offer dance lessons, a monthly town hall dance and host the “Steilacoom Dance Company. “This unique Center addresses the needs of all Town residents; youth, adult and older adults while striving to create a positive sense of community by encouraging citizen participation in all programs, services and special events.”

The Waterfront Futures Group has made a commitment to involve the community in the planning process of the waterfront redevelopment. There is a strong feeling that the interface between the water and land is a community affair. The “community” should share a piece of the redevelopment for hosting social events right by the waterfront. What could be more traditional, unifying, vibrant and social than fostering the enjoyment of social dance, celebration, and music? The waterfront is the ideal location for a large community hall – precisely reflecting the communal ethos of the Waterfront Futures Group intent.

We respectfully propose that a large community hall be a part of the waterfront redevelopment plans with special consideration given to the

needs of musicians and social dance. This is a perfect example of community social interaction, performance, music, energy and harmony – cutting across virtually all social, age and economic groups. It would be good for the waterfront, and for Bellingham.

Respectfully submitted:

Marcia Robey

Bellingham WA 98225

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Partial listing of social dance groups in Whatcom County:
Bellingham Country Dance Society, Bellingham Scottish Country Dancers, Bellingham Chapter of the U.S. Amateur Ballroom Dance Association, Scandinavian Dances We Dance, Fourth Corner Folk Dancers, Rainbow Squares Square Dance

SURVEY OF SEARCH RESULTS

A recent search for a community dance hall venue of 4,500 to 6,000 square feet found the following.

FACILITY	SQUARE FEET	PUBLIC/PRIVATE	FLOORING	SUITABILITY
Bellingham Cruise Terminal	Unknown	Public	Concrete and carpet	NO: concrete flooring; portable dance floor too small
Bellingham High School	14,915	Public	Wood	OK: too large; poor aesthetics; poor acoustics; kitchen not part of gym rental; only soft soled shoes allowed on floor; tarps need to be placed under tables and chairs
Bellwether Ballroom	4,437	Private	Carpet with wood dance floor	NO: carpet on floor; dance floor too small
Best Western Inn	6,000 approx.	Private	Carpet with very small wood dance floor	NO: Dance floor too small
Bloedel-Donovan Gym	4,368	Public	Linoleum tile	NO: flooring not wood; poor aesthetics; feels like gym
Bloedel-Donovan Small Pavilion	700	Public	Unknown	NO: Not large enough
Boulevard Park Community Building	Unknown	Public	Unknown	NO: not large enough
Carver Gym WWU	Unknown	Private	Wood	OK: too large, poor aesthetics; poor acoustics; kitchen not part of gym rental
Depot Market ² Square (projected Farmers Market site)	Unknown	Public	Concrete	NO: information to date indicates flooring will be existing road concrete with a slope
Eagles Hall	Unknown	Private	Wood	OK: too small for

² Perhaps the Planning Commission could combine the needs of social dance with this project creating a space suitable for dance within this facility.

				large dances; floor is good quality; smaller dances are held here
Elks Lodge	Unknown	Private	Wood and carpet	NO: too small; small wood dance floor
Fairhaven Library Auditorium	1,404	Public	Wood	NO: Not large enough; good floor; many smaller dances are held in this hall throughout the year
Fairhaven Middle School	16,430	Public	Wood over concrete	OK: Wood over concrete (shin splints); poor acoustics; poor aesthetics; poor reception area; no kitchen; only soft soled shoes allowed on floor; tarps must be placed under tables/chairs
Fairhaven Park Community Building	Unknown	Public	Unknown	NO: not big enough
Fourth Corner Community Church	Unknown	Private	Wood	NO: Not large enough; good floor; haunted; many smaller dances are held here
Fox Hall at Hampton Inn	Unknown	Private	All carpet	NO; No wood floor
Leopold Crystal Ballroom	Unknown	Private	Carpet and wood	NO: NOT AVAILABLE FOR RENTAL ANYMORE; mostly carpet
Lummi Nation Community Center	Unknown	Private	Concrete	NO: concrete floor
Majestic	4,400	Private	Wood	OK: Nice facility but posts break up floor and take away from large amount of usable square footage; not suitable for large line-type dancing; excellent floors
Northwood Hall	Unknown	Private	Carpet and wood	NO: too small; small wood dance floor
Pacific Danceworks Studio	Unknown	Private	Wood	NO: not large enough
Resort Semi-Ah-Moo	6,500 total 900 wood	Private	Carpet with wood parquet dance floor (only 900 sf wood)	NO: not enough wood dance floor; expensive; remote location

Scottish Rite Temple	Unknown	Private	Unknown	NO: not large enough; rooms not suitable for dance
Squalicum Boathouse	Unknown	Public	Concrete	NO: not large enough; concrete floors
Sudden Valley Dance Barn	3,700 total 1,400 wood	Private	Carpet and wood (only 1,400 wood)	NO: not large enough dance floor; remote location
Unitarian Church	Unknown	Private	Wood	NO: not large enough
Viking Union WWU	5,928	Private	Vinyl	NO: flooring not suitable for dance
Ving! WWU Dance Dept.	Unknown	Private	Wood	NO: not large enough
Wade King Recreational Center gymnasium	19,344	Private	Wood	NO: too large; shoe sole restrictions; poor acoustics; open floor plan
Wade King Recreational Center multi-purpose room	Unknown	Private	Rubber flooring	NO: flooring not suitable, open floor plan not suitable
Whatcom Hills Waldorf School Alia Hall	Unknown	Private	Wood	NO: not large enough
YMCA Multi-purpose room	Unknown	Private	Wood	NO: not large enough
YWCA Ballroom	Unknown	Private	Wood	NO: Not large enough; nice floor

COMMUNITY HALLS IN CITY OF SIMILAR SIZE
FOR COMPARISON

Vancouver-Clark WASHINGTON Parks & Recreation

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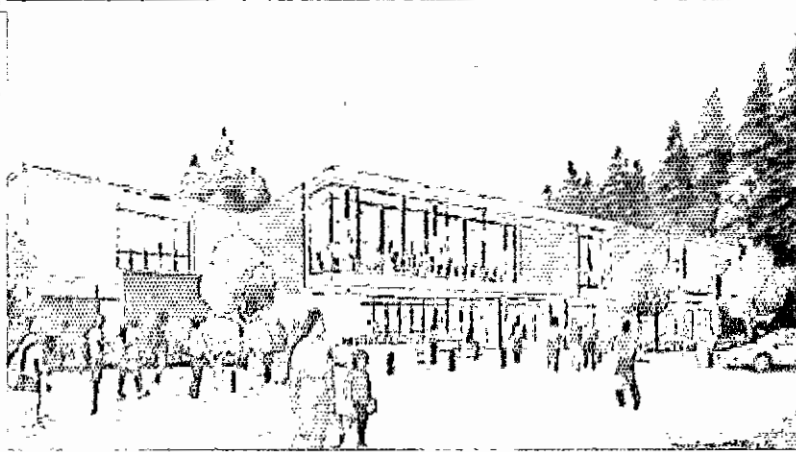
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Firstenburg Community Center

Calling all of Vancouver's kids, teens, families, and seniors... The City of Vancouver is building a new Community Center. The Firstenburg Community Center will be located on NE 136th Avenue, north of East Mill Plain. Construction is beginning this summer, with a grand opening planned for the summer of 2005.

[View the floor plans and site plan.](#) (PDF)

[View the progress in clearing the site for construction.](#) (PDF)

[Purchase a Firstenburg Community Center Paver.](#)

[View highlights of the June 25th Groundbreaking Celebration.](#)

The Firstenburg Community Center will be a place to swim, work out, play ball in the gym, take a class, attend a celebration, or meet your neighbors. The center promises something for everyone!

- Activity pool with slide
- Two-court gymnasium
- Community room with catering kitchen & patio
- Teen lounge
- Senior lounge
- Game room
- Aerobics/dance studio
- Fitness space
- Multi-purpose classroom

— 3400 \$
1000 \$

*Under construction
2003 pop. Clark 379,000
pop Vancouver 1,425,600*

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Luepke Senior Center

1009 E. McLoughlin
Vancouver, WA 98663
(360) 696-8202

Luepke Senior Center, located in Central Park, adjacent to the Marshall Community Center, is owned and operated by the City of Vancouver. The Luepke Senior Center is a full-service senior center that has over 100,000 participant users of its enrichment activities each year. Luepke Center also provides the primary kitchen facilities to support the Vancouver-Clark Senior Nutrition and Activities Program (SNAP).

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Recreation Catalog

Full schedules and details of activities and class people of all ages are available on-line. Reg starting August 24th, activities!

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Field w/ hardwood floors

TOWN OF STEILACOOM

...providing high quality service to the public while preserving the past and meeting the changing economic environment...



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Community Center

The Center is located at 2301 Worthington Street, (behind the Department of Safety). It is a multi-purpose facility that provides recreational activities, social services, cultural programs, educational classes and special events for Steilacoom area residents. This unique Center addresses the needs of all Town residents; youth, adult, and older adults while striving to create a positive sense of community by encouraging citizen participation in all programs, services, and special events. It is operational on:

**Community Center Hours: Mon-Thurs , 8 AM- 8 PM
Friday 8 AM - 5 PM**

Looking for a place to get together? Whether you have a small group or a much larger one, the Community Center, Town Hall and our Parks are all great places to hold parties, weddings, meetings, reunions and other important gatherings. For information on renting one of the Town's facilities, contact Pauline Monk by scrolling down to the end of this page or call her at (253) 983-2599.

For assistance, please call (253) 581-1076

YOUTH PROGRAMS:

Moving to the Music (Ages 3 - 5 years)

Robin brings her musical surprise bag filled with props, puppets, and a variety of instruments. Bring your dancing feet and move to a happy beat!

Friday 10:30am - 11:00am

Playtime Adventure (Ages 3 - 5 years)

Tots explore art media, games, and stories and lots of positive socialization.

Mondays & Thursdays 9:15 - 11:15 AM, 12:15 - 2:15 PM

Before & After-School Programs

These two programs offer supervised recreational activities including art, crafts, games, sports and opportunities to socialize and make friends.

Club AM 6:30am - 8:30am

Explorer Club 3:00pm - 6:00pm

Summer Camp

We have ten weeks of fun and creativity for the youngsters throughout the whole summer. Enjoy the different weekly themes and the socialization that makes this camp unique.

Gymnastics

Floor exercise, Bars, Beam Vault & Trampoline are all part of this well-rounded program.

Monday & Wednesday

Ages 4 - 6 years: 4:15pm - 4:45pm

Ages 7 & up: 4:45pm - 5:30pm

Teen Band Nights

Every Friday night at the Community Center starting at 7 PM and featuring at least 3 new bands each week. \$5.

Traditional Okinawan Karate-Do

Do you want to learn the basics of this very disciplined activity? We have a World champion coach who wants to share his expertise with you.

Tuesday - Thursdays, 6 - 7 PM, under 13 yrs old

7 - 8:30 PM, 13 and above

T-Ball and Coach Pitch

These two programs will be ongoing throughout the summer. They are tailored to the entry level youngster with an emphasis on skill building, team, and fun. (253) 983-2052

Washington Cheer Academy

A Cheer Clinic with an emphasis on conditioning, tumbling, cheer/dance instruction and basic stunting.

Tuesdays & Thursdays, Minis (K-2nd) 4PM-5PM; Pee Wees (grades 3 &4) 5PM-6:30PM; Juniors (grades 5-9) 6:30PM-8PM

Scouts

We have very active scouting programs for both boys

and girls. These groups meet on Monday & Tuesday after the school day.

ADULT AND OLDER ADULT PROGRAMS:

Let's Play Bridge!

Every Wednesday 9:30 AM - Noon
Every Thursday 11:30 AM - 4 PM

Tournaments on the last Thursday of every month!

Aerobics & Strength Training

Sandi Creger is ready to help you combine the benefits of aerobics and strength training.
Monday - Saturday 8:15am - 9:15am

Jackie Sorenson Aerobic Dance

Are you a dance person? Join Beverly Leslie and other members of the class as they "strut their stuff".
Monday & Wednesday, 4:30pm - 5:30pm

Rejuvenate Yourself

This stretching & strength training class will promote flexibility, strength, and energy. Wendy Field presents sessions on Mon & Wed, 3:30 - 4:30 PM and Noon to 1 PM on Fridays.

Chair Exercise

Need a little softer approach to movement and stretching? Steve welcomes everyone with music and fun.
Tuesday & Friday, 11:30am - Noon

Fitness Room

Our expanded exercise room offers machines, free weights and several pieces of aerobic equipment including three powered treadmills. Our room is open during all normal Center hours.

This Business of Balance

Session III starts on Tuesday, August 17 and concludes on Friday, September 10, 11-11:45 am. Our concentration will be on sensory balance issues, fall prevention, strength improvement and improving confidence. We have had great success in the previous two sessions, so join us and improve quality of life challenges.

Ballroom Dance

This class offers the basics of popular ballroom dances such as Swing, Foxtrot, Waltz, and Latin variations.
Friday, 7:00pm - 8:15pm

Enhance Your Dance

This presentation concentrates on one particular dance for a month and presents more on styling and presentation.
(Tango, Swing, etc.)
Tuesday, 7:00pm - 8:15pm

Monthly Town Hall Dance

Enjoy live music, a beautiful wooden dance floor, and an outstanding view of Puget Sound. What could be better!
Fourth Friday of each month, 8:00pm - 10:00pm

Tap Dancing

Have you always wanted to stimulate those tapping feet? Mary Petersen is ready to present the basic steps of the "Tap Dancer".
Monday, 5:45pm - 7:00pm

Steilacoom Dance Company

This professional group of dancers studies to capture the beauty of dance. Auditions are held monthly. Listen to the rhythm of those dancing feet!
Monday, 10:00am - 1:00pm

Mark your calendars now for Friday, October 8th, 7 pm at the community center to experience a spectacular performance of Tap and Polynesian dance expressions. The company presents "The Spirit of the Dance" a great example of the diversification of our American culture. You will be thrilled by the dazzling costumes and the rhythmical interpretations of some great music.

Yoga

Drop in and meet Martha Hawk during one of her relaxing sessions. A great wellness opportunity that is open to all ages.
Tuesday & Thursday, 9:30 - 10:30AM

Van Trips

throughout the Puget Sound area.

Monthly day trips are scheduled to selective attractions

Open Gym Basketball

Meet at Pioneer Middle School Gym and enjoy the opportunities to meet new friends and play a "some hoops".
Wednesdays, 6:00pm - 8:00pm

Community Center Gallery Showing

Don't miss the local artists' presentations at the community center gallery. Every month a new showing is presented at this free gallery that is open during normal center operations. Please call (253) 581-1076 for additional information.

COMMUNITY SERVICES:**Blood Pressure Readings**

Wednesdays, 11:00am - 1:00pm

Foot Care

First Tuesday of the month

9:00am - 3:00pm

Please Call for reservations, 581-1076

Center Lunch Bunch (lunch)

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday: Noon - 1:00pm

Don't forget to come and enjoy the following special programs:

Wednesday, July 21st. The Leilani dancers will be here to add that polynesian flavor to our Luau. Aloha!

Wednesday, August 18th. It's time for that great Ice Cream Social with all the trimmings. Remember that "barber shop" harmony that we all enjoyed so much; it's back!

Wednesday, September 22d. To celebrate National Ballroom Dance week, we will have a dance demonstration and some other surprises for your pleasure. Are there any "Fred and Gingers" out there?

Please call (253) 983-2059 for reservations.

Summer Concert Series

This summer highlight will become a reality once again on Wednesday evenings at Pioneer Orchard Park, 6:30-8 pm, during the months of July & August. Look for the schedule at the Community Center. (253) 581-1076.

Steilacoom Food Pantry

Second Wednesday & Fourth Saturday

Please call 581-1076 to sign up for the scheduled distributions of food and for information on our emergency food availability.

[Click here to send an email to the Community Center](#)



PETITION SIGNATURES
ONLINE AND IN PERSON

62 Signatures
&/or
Comments