

INSIDE Bellingham

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The Future of Bellingham

By City Council President **Pinky Vargas**

I've learned a lot in my first term on Bellingham City Council, but one lesson is ever-present. The decisions we make today shape tomorrow. Many of the challenges that we are dealing with today are the results of decisions made years ago.

Today, with working on our 20 year Comprehensive Plan update, the waterfront redevelopment and building a new jail, future Bellingham is always on my mind. What does future Bellingham look like? We want to be welcoming and vibrant, so how do we get there? It's a question we all should ask ourselves. It's not just the fun stuff like what are we doing on the waterfront on a Friday night in July 2025, but also the harder questions, like where will everyone live? We currently have a substantial homeless population and our objective is to find housing for all. Housing is a huge complex equation and Bellingham is only going to become more popular. We are inspired to think more creatively because in our future we'll

all be a little cozier.

Our task is to examine the estimations and predictions for our population and economy in 20 years, with our current needs, policies, and dollars, while protecting our environment and engaging the public every step of the way. Change can be hard and scary for many but it's critical to be a sustainable community and economy. A long-term vision and thoughtful planning allows us to change the systems for the better instead of reacting. Our environmental actions today, like upgrading our city streetlights to LEDs for safety and energy efficiency, our Creek Restoration Projects, proclaiming 2016 our Energy Year and competing in the www.bellinghamenergyprize.org, secure a healthy Bellingham for future generations. It is a privilege to serve our beautiful Bellingham. Never a dull moment on Council, always something new to learn. We love to see new faces in the Council Chambers, please come visit and help design our future. For more information on City Council, visit www.cob.org/gov/council

Bellingham's downtown waterfront is getting a new park.
See page 3 for story.

SAVE ENERGY

BELLINGHAM ENERGY PRIZE

The City of Bellingham is currently tied for fourth place with the City of Bellevue for the national Georgetown Energy Prize. About 3,200 Bellingham residents have taken energy-saving measures like scheduling a home energy assessment through the Community Energy Challenge, Puget Sound Energy, or the Opportunity Council's Weatherization Program. This number also includes residents signing up online at BellinghamEnergyPrize.org where they can show their commitment to save energy, obtain a comprehensive list of rebates, track their energy usage, receive helpful energy saving tips or read in depth energy saving articles.

There have been many suggestions from folks all over Bellingham about what the City should do if it wins the \$5 million prize. Everything from funding projects for low-income households to a biomethane sewage plant has been recommended. The winnings need to be spent on an energy-efficient project that benefits the community as a whole, so the City would like to encourage everyone to submit your ideas on the Bellingham Energy Prize Facebook page or in the News and Events section of BellinghamEnergyPrize.org.

INSIDE

2 PARKADE UPGRADE

2 LED STREETLIGHTS

3 NOVEMBER BALLOT MEASURES

4 STAFF SPOTLIGHT



COMMERCIAL STREET PARKING GARAGE GETS AN UPGRADE

The City's Commercial Street Parking Garage, formerly known as the Parkade, is undergoing some changes this year. Scheduled for completion by the end of 2016, the project will improve lighting, signage and railings. Stairwell windows and structural improvements will also be added.

Signage will help incorporate the official name, the Commercial Street Parking Garage, into local vocabulary. The building was inconsistently labeled on maps, which meant out-of-towners were often unable to locate the garage.

A living green wall is also in the works, on the Commercial Street side of the building. Metal railings are being installed, later to be accompanied by plants that will slowly cover the side of the building over a few years.

The lowest floor of the Commercial Street Parking Garage is open for public parking at 75 cents an hour from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays. All five levels are free and open for public parking after 5 p.m. and on weekends.

LED streetlights help environment, make streets safer

Bellingham City Council approved light-emitting diode (LED) conversion of Bellingham's 3,700 City-owned street lights two years ago, based on other cities' experience and successful installation on several Bellingham streets. Beginning this year, LEDs will save the City approximately \$240,000 annually in lighting costs. The savings will pay for the upgrade, which will reduce the City's carbon footprint. LEDs help achieve several objectives. They last up to six times longer than previous sodium vapor lights, using less energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption. They are more energy efficient, which will help the City meet its climate action goals, and they are cost-effective, so they save taxpayers money. The new LEDs also improve visibility. Better light quality and illumination can make Bellingham safer, as the new streetlights improve visibility for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians, and keep streets lit for those walking at night.

OTHER BENEFITS ARE:

- **Lights can be dimmed as much as 90 percent in some areas; Bellingham is among the first in the nation with this ability.**
- **The City stays current with emerging research and technology, to ensure it can provide equitable options for street lights for all neighborhoods.**
- **LED street lights reduce night sky pollution.**

In addition to saving nearly a quarter-million dollars per year in lighting costs, taxpayers will also benefit from lower maintenance and personnel expenses, improved visibility and enhanced safety, and the assurance that the City is doing all it can to conserve our resources and reduce impact on the environment.

To learn more about the City's new lights, visit www.cob.org and search "LED resources." For questions or comments, contact cwilliams@cob.org.

LED LIGHTING BY THE NUMBERS:

YEARS OF LIFE EXPECTANCY

GUARANTEED

10

EXPECTED

20

NUMBER OF STREET LIGHTS REPLACED

3,700

PERCENTAGE OF LESS ENERGY USED

50-60%

TOTAL PROJECT COST AFTER COMPLETION

\$4,000,000

TOTAL ANNUAL SAVING TO TAXPAYERS

\$240,000

New developments coming to WHATCOM WATERWAY

The community's long awaited access to the Bellingham waterfront is coming next year. The final design of Bellingham's newest park is underway, with construction scheduled to begin early 2017. Located off Roeder Avenue and adjacent to Whatcom Waterway, the one-acre park will include a play area, artwork, walking paths and lawns. The existing Central Avenue pier will be converted from a street to a pedestrian and bicycle promenade and will connect to the park.

The City has allocated \$727,000 for park design through a State of Washington Department of Commerce Brownfield grant, and local funds will cover the rest of the \$3.8 million project. This project is just the first of the 33 acres of parks planned for the former industrial site.

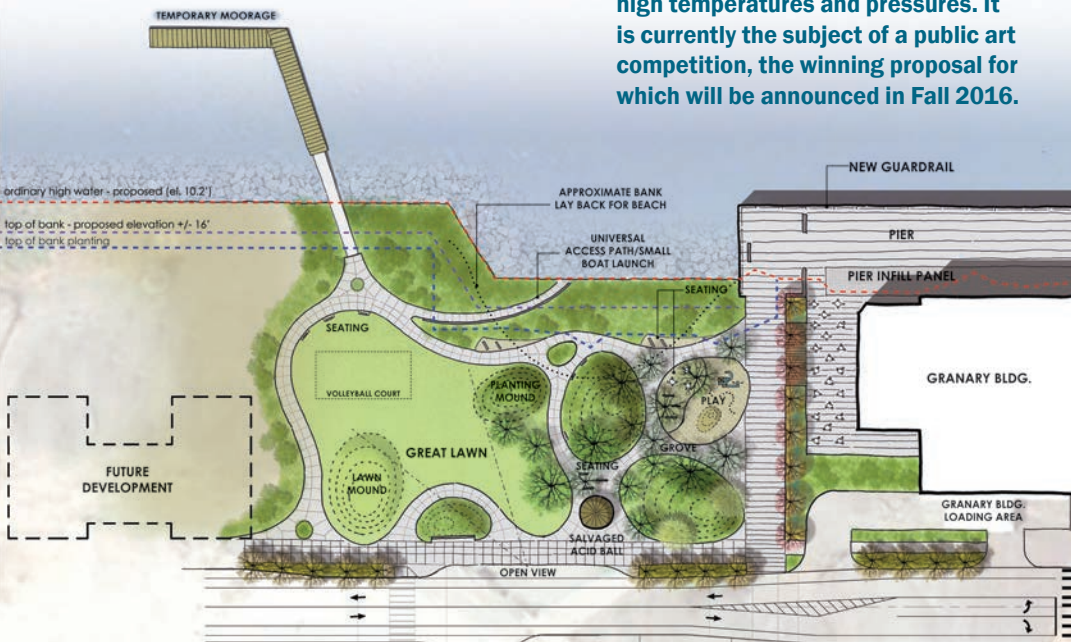
Next to the park and connecting to Central Avenue pier is the historic Granary Building. Work is underway by a private developer to remodel the Granary, and it is projected for completion in mid-2017. The building will accommodate shops, restaurants and upper-story offices.

The Port of Bellingham, in coordination with the Washington State Department of Ecology, continues to provide clean-up on the site for these and future projects, and the park and Granary developments are a step towards fulfilling the City's priority to provide public access to Bellingham's spectacular waterfront.

For more information, visit cob.org and search "waterfront district."



▲ This 40-foot tall, 30-foot diameter steel globe, known as the acid ball, was used in cooking wood chips at high temperatures and pressures. It is currently the subject of a public art competition, the winning proposal for which will be announced in Fall 2016.



Bellingham voters will see two local levies on the November ballot: An emergency medical services (EMS) levy and a Greenways IV levy. Here's some facts about these two levies.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Levy

This is a six-year, 29.5-cent levy that supports coordinated emergency medical services for the entire county. The levy is estimated to support the countywide EMS system of approximately \$46 million in services over the next six years. This amount will cost a homeowner with a \$300,000 home about \$90 per year. The Bellingham City Council passed a resolution in May 2016 approving of the ballot proposition, stating that the Whatcom County EMS is facing increasing costs and dwindling reserves that will be exhausted by 2017. The Whatcom County Council passed an ordinance placing the levy on the ballot later that month.

Greenways IV Levy

This Bellingham levy would collect up to 50 cents per \$1,000 in assessed valuation over a period of seven years. It renews an existing levy that expires in 2016, lowering the rate from 57 cents. The funds will be used for park property development, acquisition and park maintenance and operations. Bellingham City Council passed a resolution putting this levy on the ballot in June, stating that residents must decide how to shape the future of the City's greenways, open space sites, parks, park facilities and trails. For more information, visit www.cob.org/vote



Q^{AND}A

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Ron Richard, Fire Marshal

Can you tell us a little about yourself?

A: I was born and raised in Vancouver, Washington. After graduating from the Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut in 1991, I was stationed aboard a buoy-tender in Guam. That same year, we brought the ship from Guam to the Fairhaven dry-dock for repairs, which is how I first learned of and fell in love with Bellingham. In 2000, I was hired by the Bellingham Fire Department. This June, I was promoted from Fire Captain to Life Safety Division Chief, which is also referred to as the Fire Marshal. My wife and I feel very fortunate to have settled in Bellingham and to have raised our three kids in this great community.

What does the Fire Marshal do?

A: I lead Bellingham Fire Department's Life Safety Division, which is responsible for our department's fire prevention programs aimed at preventing loss of life, injuries and property damage. These programs include public education, code enforcement activities, new construction plan reviews and inspections, and fire investigations to determine origin and cause of fires. I like to say that our division is small, but mighty! With just five employees, the Life Safety Division has far-reaching impacts that help keep our great community safe.

What can you tell us about the Bellingham Fire Department's merger with Whatcom Fire Dist. 8?

A: On July 1, Bellingham Fire Department began providing fire protection and emergency medical services throughout District 8, which serves Marietta and Gooseberry Point. As part of an inter-local agreement between our two agencies, eight career firefighters with District 8 transferred employment and have become Bellingham Fire Department employees. This agreement is mutually beneficial by providing added emergency response resource depth in both communities.

What is something that people can do to be safe at home?

A: First and foremost, I recommend that you always have working smoke detectors in your home and that you have pre-planned your escape routes. Early notification from working smoke detectors cuts the risk of dying in a house fire in half. Time is of the essence. Modern home furnishings burn hotter and faster, dramatically reducing the amount of time to escape to safety. When our fire engines roll up, we want to see you at the curb and out of danger.



FIRE DEPARTMENT OPEN HOUSES

Fire Department open houses will be taking place during Fire Prevention Week on Saturday, October 15 from 1-4pm at all Bellingham Fire Department and Whatcom County Fire District 8 fire stations.

The addresses for the fire stations are:

- **Station 1 - 1800 Broadway St.**
- **Station 2 - 1590 Harris Ave.**
- **Station 3 - 1111 Billy Frank Jr. St.**
- **Station 4 - 2306 Yew St.**
- **Station 5 - 3314 Northwest Ave.**
- **Station 6 - 4060 Deemer Rd.**
- **Station 31 (Marietta) - 752 Marine Dr.**
- **Station 34 (Gooseberry Point) - 2600 McKenzie Rd.**

Fire department personnel will be present to discuss fire safety, perform station tours, and provide tours of fire engines and other fire apparatus. The theme for this year's Fire Prevention Week is "Don't Wait - Check the Date! Replace Smoke Alarms Every 10 Years."

For more information about the Bellingham Fire Department, visit www.cob.org/gov/dept/fire



PAUL LEESON

LIBRARY SUMMER READING PROGRAM

Thousands of young readers who participated in the Bellingham Public Library's Summer Reading program returned to the classroom ready to learn this fall.

Summer Reading challenges elementary students, tweens and teens to keep their brains active and engaged by reading or listening to books over the summer. Tracking their reading and completing reading challenges earns them prizes and free books donated by local businesses and organizations.

Even the youngest children (and parents) are able to be Summer Reading Superstars by completing activities designed to get families talking, singing, reading, writing and playing together, building a solid foundation for reading in the future.

More than 2,000 students finished Summer Reading programs this year. This is one of dozens and dozens of popular enrichment programs held by the library year-around for our community's youth.

Visit www.bellinghampubliclibrary.org for more information.

◀ **Summer Reading Superstars Catherine and Myles Schumacher with Bellingham Public Library staff member Bernice Chang.**