

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

Moonwater (00:00:01):

Good evening. Welcome. Thank you all for joining us for the last of four forums in this series of listening sessions focused on race and justice in Whatcom County. My name is Moonwater, and I serve as executive director of the Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center. We are an independent nonprofit organization, and my role here tonight is as an impartial moderator for tonight's meeting. This is a public meeting sponsored by the city of Bellingham, Whatcom County, Lummi Nation, and Western Washington University. Representatives of those entities, along with the city and County council members listening with us tonight, are listening and participating with us this evening. Shortly, many of the people that you see now, will shift into the attendee listening role to make space for community members to speak and be seen tonight. This Zoom meeting is being recorded and is also being live streamed on YouTube and BTV channel 10. Technical support is being provided by the city of Bellingham.

Moonwater (00:01:04):

And I will be working with them to support a smooth of an experience tonight as possible for everyone. Thank you in advance as I have before for your grace and patience with any technical glitches if they arise. We have an ASL translator who will be with us for the duration of tonight's meeting, and Spanish and Punjabi interpreters are standing by if needed. We also will be rotating through several remote locations today, in an effort to increase access and participation for these sessions. If you're just joining us and would like to speak tonight, please do so by signing up, visiting [@www.cob.org/listeningseries](http://www.cob.org/listeningseries). As we have previously, I'd also like to begin this evening with a land acknowledgement, and offer each of us the opportunity to reflect on the important truth that here in Whatcom County, we are occupying the ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish peoples, who have lived in the Salish sea basin throughout the San Juan Islands and the North Cascades Watershed from time immemorial.

Moonwater (00:02:10):

I want to express the deepest respect and gratitude for our indigenous neighbors, the Lummi Nation and Nooksack tribe, for the enduring care and protection of this land. I offer this acknowledgement as a means to honor their relationship with the land we all share, and a call to the community at large towards further recognition, reflection, learning, and action. Thank you. And thank you to our city and County council members and local leaders. I'll ask that you now kindly turn off your videos and we will move you to attendees status. We are maintaining a few modifications to the meeting tonight, to create more ease and access for participants. For the remainder of the meeting, we are intentionally minimizing the number of people on the screen, to make the ASL interpreting more accessible. And I believe we now have the opportunity to hear briefly from Mayor Fleetwood. Mayor Fleetwood.

Mayor Fleetwood (00:03:06):

Thank you Moonwater. I just want to take this time to briefly express thanks and gratitude to a number of people who have helped with this. Afterwards, I look forward to offering some closing remarks along with County Executive [Sudu 00:03:26]. First and foremost, I just want to thank you, Moonwater. Your contribution to this listening series has been tremendous. We couldn't have done it without you. You've done a really good job, and thank you to you. I want to thank the technical staff that have put this on, and have spent a lot of time working through a variety of issues over the course of the last couple of weeks, and we've seen things go increasingly smooth. Lots of learning has been happening just in the context of Zoom meetings for this sort of thing. So we've all been learning a lot. I want to thank Janice

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

Keller, the city of Bellingham communications director, who has done so much to help get this off the ground.

Mayor Fleetwood (00:04:16):

She's collaborated a great deal I know with you Moonwater, in making this go as smoothly as we can. To our sponsors, Whatcom County, Western Washington University, Lummi Nation, the city of Bellingham. I thank you. A number of community liaisons have helped us improve this effort and helped us make a more inclusive well-organized listening series. And in the course of this effort, we've created some good bonds. It's been a good experience learning and getting to know a number of important people who I know are going to be partners in this effort as we continue this work. A number of volunteers at remote locations, we thank you. And then of course, to all of the speakers who have taken time out of their busy lives and chosen to express themselves. Well, just really deep gratitude. We've heard so many things that have contributed. I know lots of note taking has been happening. There's going to be transcription of this. We're going to ruminate on the things we've heard and you ultimately are what have made this a beneficial effort. So I thank you all. Back to you Moonwater.

Moonwater (00:05:47):

Thank you Mayor Fleetwood. So in the spirit of a shared understanding for today, I'd like to review just a few agreements as we move forward. And our Spanish and Punjabi interpreters will review the agreements after I share them with you tonight. So whether you were on the Zoom call or listening in another way, I invite you tonight to listen deeply, to bring humility, to reflect thoughtfully, to expect a nondisclosure, conversations and changes will be ongoing, and to share the space. So for those of you that have signed up to speak tonight, or will shortly do so, I invite you to share the space with your fellow community members, and to please limit your comments to under 10 minutes in order to allow numerous voices to be heard this evening before the close of the meeting at 7:00 PM.

Moonwater (00:06:37):

I also invite you to help center voices from people of color. So the hope of this session is to hear first and foremost from people of color. So if you have signed up to speak, and you identify as white or otherwise privileged, I respectfully invite you to consider yielding your time to make space for your fellow community members to be heard first. If you do identify as a person of color, we warmly invite you to share your perspective this evening. I also ask for your grace and patience with me as the moderator, with one another, and with technology. We may experience glitches, silence, or other moments of discomfort as we navigate trying to hold this important space in what I have found to be at times both an awkward and challenging way, but we are certainly all doing our best and appreciate you joining with us.

Moonwater (00:07:27):

Lastly, as I've shared before, it does take significant energy to show up and speak, especially to share your heart, experiences and beliefs, that perhaps you've never shared before, or have spoken time and again and haven't felt heard. So thank you so much in advance to everyone who is willing and able tonight to contribute their voice to this listening series. Could our Spanish interpreter Marta, would you please review the agreements? Thank you so much.

Marta (00:09:28):

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

[Spanish 00:07: 57].

Moonwater (00:09:34):

Thank you Marta. Piku, could you please provide Punjabi translation for us, for the agreements?

Piku (00:10:01):

[Punjabi 00:09:41]. Thank you.

Moonwater (00:10:23):

Thank you, Piku. So I'll take a moment now to explain the process this evening. If you identify as black, indigenous, or otherwise a person of color, and would like to speak today, please use the raised hand function that will be available in Zoom. City staff will be assisting behind the scenes to coordinate the order of speakers. As of now you're all meeting attendees. In groups of three, you will hear your name be called and you will then be invited to be a panelist. Liaisons that are remote locations will also assist in identifying speakers. Once you are a panelist, I will cue you when it is your turn to speak. I will ask that you unmute yourself, and if you feel comfortable or able to start your video.

Moonwater (00:11:07):

Please limit your comments to under 10 minutes, and thank you in advance for your help with time management. Once you're done speaking, I ask that you mute yourself and turn off your video. Once the group of three has spoken, they will return individually to being attendees, and the next group of three will be brought into the room. We will continue this process until about 6:40, at which point we'll identify our last speaker of the evening and begin to close today's session. So thank you all for your patience. At this point, Marta, could you share the process please in Spanish?

Marta (00:11:39):

[Spanish 00:11:42].

Moonwater (00:13:19):

Thank you Marta. Piku, could you provide translation for us please to Punjabi?

Piku (00:13:22):

[Punjabi 00:13:24].

Moonwater (00:14:27):

Thank you Piku. Thank you everyone for your patience, and at this point we will work to cue our first speaker.

Speaker 1 (00:14:35):

We have Kai, Tes, and Nasreen.

Moonwater (00:14:47):

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

Thank you. Kai, Can you please unmute yourself and if you would like to share your video, you are welcome to begin and start us off this evening.

Kai (00:14:59):

Thank you. I'm going to share tonight a version of a demands letter that will be released by the defund BPD coalition next Monday, @defundbpd.org. We felt that even though this process is being revised, it's important to be heard at the listening session, and for the full version please visit that website. Due to the recent movement in defense for black lives, we bring attention to the police department's \$34 million budget. This 36% of the city's general budget is severely inflated, and we call for a 50% cut as standing in solidarity with black lives matter and BiPAP leadership, to cut the police department funding for this year and reallocate those funds to community led health safety systems. Some of our points that we're putting forth of our programs for community and reinvestment are expanded mental health services, things that are similar to Eugene Oregon's courts program, a safe, secure, affordable housing in our community, including an end to sweeps, instead of our sweepings that we do of homeless encampments.

Kai (00:16:14):

To expend substance abuse treatment, to provide for community and cultural spaces for black and indigenous folks, and support black and indigenous economic development, and realizing that Bellingham's violent history, we owe these community members reparations and support for developing self-sufficiency as a path towards reconciliation and sovereignty for those groups. We're calling for expanded domestic violence and sexual assault services, to expand shelter capacities and to implement a restorative justice model for domestic violence and sexual assault cases, outside of the legal system, for workers cooperatives to demand the city reinvest these funds into a program that would support BiPAP, LGBT and all the depressed people. For food sovereignty, and although the food bank is a great resource to support programs like community communities developments food sovereignty program. Community land trusts are affordable way to create housing for communities, creating more safe, inclusive and sustainable neighborhoods.

Kai (00:17:27):

For diversity, equity, inclusion and education and youth programs, as this was mentioned by some members in this listening series, and demanding for black and indigenous programming and curriculum in the school system for expansion of early childcare, which has been a huge need in this community, and a proposal created by the Lydia Place, may have some good points about this. These are examples of what could be made to make our community really equitable. This coalition continues to do research on this, and we'll love to share more details as we have. We're sure that there are many other community programs and encourage you to listen to the needs of our community, and look forward to receiving your response. Thank you very much.

Moonwater (00:18:18):

Thank you so much Kai. I understand that several people have called in this evening, and so if you have called in and you would like to line up in the queue, you can dial *9, and that will mimic the raise hand function in the Zoom room. So again, if you'd like to speak and you do identify as a person of color and you have called in this evening, please dial *9, and we will put you in the queue. And I believe we have Tes next. Tes, if you can unmute yourself and share your-

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

Tes (00:18:54):

Okay, I think I'm unmuted.

Moonwater (00:18:59):

I can hear you. I can't see you. If you'd like to share your video, you're welcome to. Otherwise, the floor is yours.

Tes (00:19:04):

Okay. A very, very short story and then some questions that I'd like to throw out to some other people. I'm African American. I'm a senior citizen. When I arrived here, one of the first things I did was look around and see about the diversity here, and realized that out of four countries that I've lived in, and about four cities, this is the least diverse place I've ever lived. And I joined a group that was on the board of a group that had jazz performances in Bellingham. And what I noticed was they immediately jumped on the bandwagon of black lives matter and wrote a bunch of signs and talked about solidarity behind black lives matter. However, when I asked them why they had no black performers, they seemed a little quizzical as to why I would even say that.

Tes (00:20:04):

And so my question to the people out there as the gentleman before me, is it, are there any actual action items to bring black owned businesses, and to encourage people of color in leadership positions? These conversations go nowhere if it's just the dominant group talking about what to do. There have been a number of other cities that have had low cost loans to black owned businesses, and I just don't hear of that happening in Bellingham. And thank gosh, if we had as many black people as black lives matter signs, this would be a far more diverse city. And I'll turn it over to whoever might want to speak about that. Seth. Thank you.

Moonwater (00:21:04):

Thank you so much Tes. And I know that Mayor Fleetwood and Executive Sudu are making notes and will share some closing remarks at the end of the session tonight. So we appreciate you joining us this evening and sharing your perspective and your questions. And it looks like we have Nasreen next in the queue. If you can unmute yourself and welcome. I can see you now. Thank you Nasreen

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:21:31):

Thank you. I'm going to do my best to stick [inaudible 00:21:33], but there's a lot I have to say. I think you guys were holding these listening sessions, as others have expressed have mixed feelings about being in the position of having to educate a bunch of white people about what it's like to be a person of color in this community. I've been in this community since 1992, and I came from a diverse community in California. So I have a few different statements I just wanted to read from. So my name is Nasreen Mughal-Barrows, and my intersectionality as a Brown Muslim daughter of multi-lingual East African born, South Asian immigrants. Born in a diverse American city, and who ended up in Whatcom, is a lens of my American experience. Before I was out of high school in Whatcom, I had learned to constantly assess my safety, to notice a decreasing presence of people of color and the absence of it that indicated I was at an increased risk. From growing up in Whatcom, I understood subconsciously and now I'm fully aware that the presence of a white friend is like a passport to many social situations I would not have

August 18, 2020

Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

otherwise been readily welcome to. I knew what it was like to be a token minority, and the extremes of being either a forced representation of an entire minority group, or else treated as if I was an exception to already formed biases and prejudices. And the community is more invested in what I was than who I was. I want to speak to some experiences in high school. Actually, throughout school Whatcom. My first day in Whatcom, I was a nine year old in fourth grade, and that whole day was a day of first. For the first time in my life I walked into a classroom where I saw a sea of white faces and not one person looked like me. I noticed and so did they and I suddenly found myself in a role of educator, and it's never stopped. I was asked if I spoke Mexican several times. I responded in confusion; "You mean Spanish?"

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:23:29):

I explained my heritage is Indian and was asked, "Which tribe?" That day the Blaine Art teacher crouched down and asked me slowly and loudly. "Now, do you speak English?" I was also stripped of my name. For the first time I was told my name is too hard and asked expectantly for a nickname. And because that was clearly a barrier, I remembered one adult who called me Nas, and not once in my life have I ever introduced myself as Nas, but that unwanted nickname stuck through my time from elementary school, middle school, high school. It followed me to Whatcom Community College, and I would introduce myself and tell a white person, "My name is Nasreen." And I would let them sit with the discomfort of it. And another white friend would swoop in and reassure them, "You can call her Nas." So it was constantly shown to me that a white person's comfort was more important than my identity. Throughout my time at Whatcom, there's so many stories I can tell about experiencing racism and microaggressions, but I just wanted to touch on that.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:24:43):

The experiences that even though I benefit from privilege within systems of person of color, I've also experienced racism throughout the County and from having a... Excuse me, a knife thrown through a window at my head, and being forced out of a public business, to my husband being told that he should stick to his own kind while we were at the very spot that he proposed to me on, and he's white, to being followed hostility and local businesses that I was actually intending to support, local business, right here in downtown. So also being told obviously go back to my country and things like that. So I feel like overall, there's a well intentioned obliviousness among the community that I've experienced throughout my entire time living here. People mean well but I think there tends to be a contentedness that; Oh, they know me or they know... They've no idea of how much they don't understand.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:25:46):

So I wanted to speak to that as far as systemic racism, and how people of color are disproportionately affected by things that white people aren't, even right after the death of George Floyd. I'm a student at Whatcom Community College in my... I was supposed to graduate in June and my last clinical was pushed off to the fall. And in order to RSVP for the virtual commencement which I had intended to do, the deadline was the week after George Floyd's death, and I ended up having to reach out to the Whatcom Community College, and this is one of the things I ended up sharing with them. And I said, "I feel compelled as a person of color to share my disappointment, that Whatcom Community College did not find it appropriate to extend the May 29th RSVP deadline due to the civil unrest after George Floyd's death on 5/25. That week I grieved and cried every day. I dealt with a triggered trauma of racism and microaggressions I've experienced throughout Whatcom County and beyond.

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:26:49):

I attended the downtown vigil with my family. I educated myself on how to talk to my three year old about racism, and answer her questions about why I was so sad and crying, as well as educating my white friends and family members on the validity of black lives matter movement. Additionally, I'm a Muslim and Mr. Floyd's death came on the heels of the month of Ramadan at Eid al-Fitr, on May 24th in the backdrop of the pandemic and online community gatherings. Understandably, I think I missed the May 29th deadline while waiting for an email response on the status of an Honor Court. And I could see how other blacks indigenous and people of color may have been disproportionately affected and would be underrepresented at the ceremony recording. I also ended up that same week missing completing a survey that I received via email about a possible passenger ferry from Bellingham to the San Juan Islands. So I never got to even contribute to that.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:27:43):

Specifically when it comes to the police department. The very first time I was ever pulled over, I got a ticket, no warning. I was going downhill, got distracted by the ocean. And I was speeding. I was going a few miles over, but that was interesting to me because I always heard from everybody else about getting warnings first. And I wrote that off. I was about 16 or 17 at the time. I'm 37 now. And just a few years ago, I was pulled over again by an officer going opposite direction as me. And it turned out that my speedometer was actually off, and I ended up having to go to court and prove that. But what was interesting with that pull over was I was on my way to work, and pulled over. I gave the officer my license and registration, and he went right back to his car and didn't ask me a single thing. And he came right back with a ticket. I couldn't believe it. I said, "You can see from my driving record that a warning would have sufficed." It had been six and a half years since I had a ticket.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:28:48):

And he told me, "Oh, I didn't even pull up your driving record." He knew he was going to give me a ticket the moment he saw me. I also know as a Muslim in this community, I feel like the Bellingham Police Department is missing opportunities to access diversity. Islam is the most diverse religion in the world, and that's reflected here in Bellingham, largely. We've got people from all over within our community. And during the beginning of the pandemic, the Bellingham Police Department hosted a day where they gave out free sack lunches. That happened to be the very first day of Ramadan when Muslims began fasting from sunrise to sunset. And that's what I mean by well-intentioned obliviousness. I compelled as a Muslim, knowing that Bellingham Police Department was doing that, to make time in my day, in spite of the pandemic, in spite of studying for my board exams, raising two children. I have a one year old and a three year old.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:29:47):

I made sure that I made a point to show up, there was five minutes left, and to tell them, "Hey, you probably didn't see a single Muslim today and this is why. Thanks for what you did. I'm nursing. I'll gladly take sack lunch." And I resent that I was put in that position. Also, I've been paying attention initially to the Bellingham Police Department's perspectives dialogue. And I watched the first couple and I basically ended up feeling a greater sense of mistrust because I had been really reassured and told that there was implicit bias training that [inaudible 00:30:20] Bellingham Police Department, and I didn't see that reflected at all in the dialogues that occurred.

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:30:26):

And there's questions as far as whether implicit bias training even works. And if so, maybe that's what was reflected. But what I heard was defensiveness between officers that were looking to defend themselves and reassure each other that; No they're not racist and they police behaviors. And that was such an oblivious statement that clearly ignored inherent bias. And for me as a person of color, when I'm around an officer, I act differently. I get nervous because they have an authority over me that I'm uncomfortable with, and officers are people.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:31:03):

... I'm Comfortable with. Officers are people, first and foremost, and there's a look of when a racist looks at you that you recognize. And I have absolutely seen that on the face of people in uniform directed at me. So, a white person is never, ever, ever, ever, ever going to know what that's like. And they may be completely oblivious to that happening until maybe they have a chance to be next to the side of a person of color.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:31:25):

So even when I had the knife thrown at me when I was in a place of a business, my friends, my white friends, had been there just the weekend before and had a great time. And they were completely blown away that that experience happened to us just because I was with them.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:31:39):

So just to keep that in mind. I can speak to a bunch of different things because my intersectionality. So I want to take advantage of the opportunity to do that.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:31:46):

I have worked for several of the biggest companies in the County. I've worked for T-Mobile. I worked for BP for six years and I worked for PeaceHealth. And I can speak to, especially in peace... Working in the medical field and at PeaceHealth, the barriers that are in place to people of color in accessing services.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:32:16):

So when it came to speak people of other languages, I worked... I minored in Spanish deliberately so that I could help people access healthcare and I'm not certified. So I would basically just translate for patients that... just demographic type of information, get them scheduled for appointments, things like that.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:32:39):

But I had a situation where a scheduler insisted on pulling me from my work and making the person wait 30 minutes. And I told her... I said, "it's going to be a long time." and she was like, "I need you to do it. I can't understand them. And you speak Spanish." And I said, "all right, all right." And instead of finding another interpreter or anything like that, she insisted on waiting for me.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:33:02):

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

After 30 minutes, I went to that patient and I started speaking to them in Spanish. They answered me in English and I looked into their chart. I looked in their information. They weren't even Spanish speakers. They spoke Arabic and it turned out they spoke English just well enough that I was able to help them within five minutes. And that was an experience that that patient had that they shouldn't have had.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:33:24):

And I also am aware of another situation in another clinic in town where just recently, in the last few months, a patient had an event in the lobby and they needed immediate assistance. And the people around them assumed they were Middle Eastern because of their heavy eyebrows. And their name was actually on their shirt and it was a Hispanic name.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:33:49):

So there's such an obliviousness and lack of understanding and experience of other cultures that permeate [inaudible 00:33:57] services within this city right here.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:34:00):

And my mother has spoken English longer than I have. She speaks it with an accent. And I can't tell you how many times... She's a retired, registered nurse, but how many times when she's needed assistance, doctors or other personnel will look at me and expect me to translate rather than talking to her directly.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:34:17):

So there's a lack of respect and understanding when addressing people who do speak English as a second language, or even people who don't speak English, I've also witnessed where providers speak to the translator and say, "tell them this. Tell them that." instead of just looking at them and speaking. So that's just something else I wanted to speak to.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:34:38):

Mental health... I have a family member that took us over four months to get into a psychiatrist. And during that time, there were two different times we almost called 911. And the hesitation was a lack of trust of how 911 would respond and handle the situation with what kind of compassion. And we didn't... So we kept matters into our own hands.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:35:04):

I also have dear family friends who have dealt with DACA. And I'm aware of a person who almost committed suicide because, while dealing with homelessness, their work authorization expired. They did what they could to save any money for the \$500 application fee. They put it in themselves and it was rejected saying they filled it out incorrectly and they need to do a new application, new \$500. They were ready to commit suicide over it because how are they supposed to move forward? And I was fortunately able to help coordinate with other people services to get them the help they needed.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:35:48):

But people in that situation are not going to call 911 for help. Other people speakers and past listening sessions have described how Whatcom is a militarized County. And it is.

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:36:04):

And we had ICE raids just in 2018. And there are people suffering mental health services that will not access services because of the lack of trust. And a lot of people are doing things the hard way and we're losing some of them.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:36:21):

And then also, when you put on top of it, the disproportionate rate of effect of the Latino community due to COVID, there's just more to do. So again, talking about mental health, and we were all aware of the article that just came out, describing the incident last year with four police officers, the Bellingham police officers that took it upon themselves to exploit a person with mental health issues, a vulnerable person, to create a prank on four other officers that they were sure would appreciate the prank and described them as laughing and smirking.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:36:56):

So it's not just four officers, there's potentially eight there. There's one who said that they were uncomfortable. And a lot of people in the community I'm seeing writing it off as well, it was self-reported and they took care of it. And that's a bunch of BS. They were overheard laughing about it. And it hasn't been taken care of because they're still working.

Moonwater (00:37:19):

Nasreen?

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:37:20):

Yeah?

Moonwater (00:37:21):

Thank you so much for... And, what I'm going to ask, if this works for you, I know that we have someone else in the queue. If you can stay with us and then time permitting, we'll make our way through. And if there is more for you to share this evening, will you stay with us and we can come back to you time permitting tonight?

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:37:38):

If I could have a minute, I'll just sum it up.

Moonwater (00:37:40):

Absolutely.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:37:41):

Okay. Thank you for your time, everybody. I just wanted to point out the issues with the food desert in the most diverse area of Bellingham, as well as other people have talked about sexual assault services, and those are also severely lacking and I can testify to that. And then, so I wanted to suggest a community center. Keith Raymond has emphasized that and I agree wholeheartedly. We need a safe

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

space where people like myself feel comfortable to show up. To show up in his job, to show up with white people that we know are going to receive and respect us.

Nasreen Mughal-Barrows (00:38:15):

And I'd also suggest again, expanding childcare that's been talked on. And so there's a lot of issues that can be addressed by defunding the Bellingham police department and reallocating those funds. Thank you.

Moonwater (00:38:27):

Thank you so much for your time tonight, Nasreen. We appreciate your perspective very much. And I believe, Janice, we have someone else in the queue and I would invite folks to use the raised hand function in Zoom. And if you have called in and would like to speak, you may dial star nine to indicate that you were raising your hand.

Moonwater (00:38:49):

And, Janice, who is next in the queue?

Janice (00:38:52):

We have Mimi here now.

Moonwater (00:38:54):

Okay. Mimi, if you could unmute yourself and if you are on video and would like to share your video, you may do that now as well. Welcome.

Mimi (00:39:04):

Hi. Can you hear me all right?

Moonwater (00:39:07):

We can hear you just fine. Welcome.

Mimi (00:39:10):

Awesome. I'm going to forego sharing my video for now, but I do have a little bit to share. So my name is Mimi. A little bit about me. I've lived in Bellingham my whole life. I went through K through 12 education here in the public school system. I Attended Whatcom Community College. And then I graduated from Western Washington University. And I currently work serving my community at a local community... at a community action agency.

Mimi (00:39:41):

So having 26 years of personal experience of being black in our community, I could spend my full 10 minutes barely scratching the surface of what it's been like to grow up here. I could recount the many instances of racial profiling by both Bellingham police department and private citizens that have negatively impacted me and my family.

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

Mimi (00:40:01):

I could tell you all of the many ways, big and small, but I have been made to feel that I don't belong in my own hometown. I really commend Nasreen for sharing her story. And I hope everyone sees that as the gift that it is, because I know that I, myself am not prepared to share those things. In all honesty right now, I'm too angry. I'm too scared. And I'm too proud to cry on camera in front of people I don't know.

Mimi (00:40:29):

So instead, I'm just going to share my thoughts about a recent situation that Nasreen mentioned and I think other people did at the last listening session.

Mimi (00:40:37):

So I, like many others, was pretty outraged reading the recent Bellingham Herald article about the incident in September 2019, where three officers in their Sergeant planned and executed a prank on a group of off duty officers. The prank involved luring a man, who was homeless and experiencing mental illness, with the promises of \$5 to get into a squad car. After that, they transported him to Shari's Diner.

Mimi (00:41:04):

Once there, they sent him into the restaurant, hoping he would cause a disturbance, which would interrupt their coworkers meal. Soon after arriving, the man walked around the Shari's yelling at himself, disturbing the minimum wage workers and ultimately, he was forced to leave the restaurant, causing the scene that the officers had planned.

Mimi (00:41:23):

These officers chose to jeopardize this individual's safety and sacrifice his dignity to serve their own sadistic enjoyment. As articulated in that article, this man was known to Bellingham Police Department, has an extensive undocumented record of mental illness. These officers knew that he was vulnerable and they took advantage of it. No one capable of such a calculated and callous act should be trusted with the responsibility to serve and protect anyone, let alone our most vulnerable community members.

Mimi (00:41:55):

I could go on and on as, I'm sure many of you could, about how disturbing and how upsetting hearing that this happened to this person is, but I'm going to share just my perspective based on my own experience.

Mimi (00:42:10):

So as someone who works directly with people experiencing homelessness, behavioral, and mental health challenges and substance use disorders, learning of this incident kind of felt like a slap in the face.

Mimi (00:42:22):

I work along some of the hardest working people. They're tireless and underpaid, public servants who are dedicated to ending homelessness in our community. These officers' actions are unsupportive, at best, and an attack on this vision at worst. Believe me, I know that this work is very hard. Me and my

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

colleagues have been called every name in the book. Threatened and emotionally beat down to the point where we really questioned our ability to keep going. But I've never, in my professional experience, have I witnessed a colleague stoop to such a disturbing means to cope.

Mimi (00:42:58):

Perhaps even more concerning, was the response from Chief Doll who claims that, because the officers were remorseful, they did not need to be held accountable. Instead, each officer received a disciplinary letter, which disappears from their file after just a few years. So let me just be clear while I demand the swift and appropriate punishment be dealt to these officers for their involvement and Chief Doll for his neglect to take proper action. We can't focus this situation on a few bad apples. Many others during these listening sessions have shared local and national statistics about the racial disparities seen in the policing and justice systems, which shows that this is a persistent, insidious, and systematic problem. Focusing on a bad apple or several bad apples is irrelevant when the whole barrel is rotting. The entire system, apples and barrel, is compromised.

Mimi (00:43:54):

A start in remedying the system is to develop an independent police oversight committee, a group of community members who review police actions and use of force. This committee must be made up of a diverse group of people with representation, from the ethnic and racial communities who are disproportionately impacted by police brutality and other misconduct. It's not enough to simply have this committee. The city of Bellingham and Whatcom County officials must be tasked and chartered with not just listening, but acting on the recommendations of this committee.

Mimi (00:44:27):

Again, I just want to say thank you to everybody who is sharing their personal experiences and doing that vulnerable work. I really appreciate that. And thank you for sharing and listening.

Moonwater (00:44:44):

Thank you so much for joining us tonight, Mimi. A Reminder that if you would like to speak this evening and you have signed into Zoom, please use the raised hand function, if you're on video. If you've called in to Zoom, to indicate that you'd like to raise your hand to speak, you may dial star nine.

Moonwater (00:45:08):

I believe we also have at least two remote locations. And I'd like to check in with those folks to see if there's anyone at one of the remote locations who would like to speak. And if so, if the volunteer there could use the raised hand function in Zoom, that will let our tech team know that we have someone in the queue. And there is space, so if you would like to speak this evening and you haven't shared yet, you may indicate that now. And we will bring you into the room as a panelist. So we can hear from you this evening. Thank you.

Janice (00:45:46):

Moonwater?

Moonwater (00:45:48):

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

Yes?

Janice (00:45:48):

I have Joy, Cindy, and Melissa.

Moonwater (00:45:56):

Okay. Thank you. So let's see, Joy, if you could unmute yourself and if you have video and would like to share it, you have some time to speak this evening. Welcome.

Joy (00:46:19):

Yeah, I am unmuted. Can you hear me?

Moonwater (00:46:22):

We can hear you now. Welcome, Joy.

Joy (00:46:24):

Yeah. Hi. And I didn't think to start my video and I didn't fix my hair cause I've been painting and working outside, but I'm going to do it anyway, just because you guys always see me like, Oh, I don't know how you see me, but whatever.

Joy (00:46:40):

I'm Joy Gilfilen, president of the Restorative Community Coalition. And I have been studying the dysfunction in Whatcom County for over 10 years and the Whatcom County politics, economic, and systems. And I did it because number one, I'm a mom and I have young men who I was responsible for helping to make it into the economy and to survive after the shock waves of the 21st century hit us, as technology hit, future shock hit, the economic upheavals of 2008 hit, 9-11 hit, the entire world changed on us very, very, very rapidly.

Joy (00:47:25):

And as a business coach, an international business coach, working with free enterprise development across the nation, I experienced an 80% turnover in closing rates and in sales retention rates. And in the possibility that young people or other people who had been marginalized by the corporate growth of business, they were all bucked out of the saddle. And I started looking at what was the problem.

Joy (00:47:57):

I started to teach programs. And then I found out that in Whatcom County, we were planning on building... on passing two more taxes. We had three taxes that we were already paying for mass incarceration and justice, and the county wanted to pass two more taxes. And they wanted to spend \$120 million on building a 2,450 bed jail in the county when we had an 85% reduction in juvenile crime. We had a 15% reduction in violent crime. And it didn't make any sense.

Joy (00:48:30):

August 18, 2020

Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

And I started studying and looking at all these distortions and disproportionate things. Over the last 10 years, I've ended up serving as the president of the Restorative Community Coalition, deeply digging into what happens to people who get arrested. What happens to their family? How does it absolutely drive the poverty rates, homelessness rates, mental illness problems, everything else that we are talking about and we're dealing with now in Billingham, downtown in our cities.

Joy (00:49:00):

I mean, we've got distortions so that the mayors of our cities are not getting enough money because of sales tax transformation. These are all different elements of a master problem. After 10 years, I ended up having to run for sheriff to be able to understand certain problems that we have in the community. I had to run for county executive. I'm not a politician. I didn't want to be elected, but I had to be elected because as a white woman, who was saying something against the white establishment, okay. And I'm not mad at white people. I am a white woman. But I'll tell you the most confusing thing that I found out in Whatcom County, Whatcom County, the problem is not obvious racism. That's a symptom. You know what the problem is? It is deep, deep, deep embedded rankism, R-A-N-K-I-S-M. It's a disease that I believe has been developed over 50 years as our community has learned how to live together with the underlying racism that we have had to do cover up. We're a very polite, very proper community. Everything is done by... if you're a member of the right social group or you're a member of the right cast, or if you're the member of the right political group, or... the member... I've got to close my door. Or if you are a member of the right majority group, then you can be heard. But if you are not part of the right rank, you do not get heard. I have tried hundreds of ways. Our coalition, the Restorative Community Coalition, has developed social programs. We have developed court navigator programs that have not been funded and have not even been properly heard by the county council. We had to fight against the jail tax and shut that down because, had the jail industry gotten its way, we would have been... our county would have been so deeply embedded in producing the militarized economy that we would have had no way out at all, no way out.

Joy (00:51:09):

So the only thing that our taxpayers could do, we came repeatedly. I don't know how many times I have testified. Dozens and dozens of my clients have testified. People who were arrested, who are terrified to come speak in front of the rank and file at the Incarceration Prevention Reduction Taskforce.

Joy (00:51:29):

We had homeless and broken, mentally ill people, moms, come to speak and they were kicked out of the room. I've been asked to leave a county council meeting that we were invited to come to because the county council authorities decided to go into executive session. You were there, Satpal. It happened to you too. You know what? It's not okay. And to pretend that we're going to be okay if we just simply defund the police or that we're simply going to have programs.

Joy (00:52:01):

I think all of those are absolutely essential, but we have to deal with the taxpayer's return on investment and economic development in Whatcom County. The taxpayers can not pay more money. COVID and the economic upheaval of our economy. We are hobbled. We are broken. We don't have sales tax money.

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

Joy (00:52:24):

We have to start teaching small people how to do free enterprise. We have to do coaching programs. We have to help the public learn how in the hell to cope when they have no revenue. We have to learn how to grow food, because you know what, we're facing a depression, a massive one, and none of us are big enough to stop it. And I don't care how many small programs...

Joy (00:52:49):

Yes, it's true. Our jail is... was overcrowded. It didn't have to be. We proved that. We proved that we could do a whole bunch of things other than build a jail. We can build a Restorative Community Coalition building that can help house and train and teach and coach. We've proved that you can do homeless housing. Homes now has done an extraordinary job taking people off the streets. And I'll tell you what, sweeping people and trying to kick them out of downtown is an urban legend that cannot work.

Joy (00:53:23):

We have to put these people to work. They want to work. They don't know how and they don't have jobs. So we have to do economic development and we have to do it not from the standpoint of the county's opinion or the city's opinion. Every single one of these municipalities tribes [inaudible 00:22:41]...

Joy (00:53:39):

Every entity is a separate corporation and they are all fighting for their own turf. It's all business. It's all corporate to corporate negotiations and they are not working on behalf of the taxpayers. And you know why? I finally figured it out with this last [inaudible 00:53:54] election when I ran for sheriff and I watched our county succumb for another time in a row, to hire jail planning builders, building contractors, to tell us how to do medical needs assessments. They don't know. You know who does know? All of the nonprofits that are not funded in this community who need to do personal growth.

Joy (00:54:16):

They need to help their family members deal with complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder that I proved to myself because the county wouldn't do it. I did 79 interviews on purpose to understand what happens when you get arrested. Why is it that all of a sudden valedictorians cannot even function? They go in front of the court and they blather like an idiot. You know why? Because getting arrested as the most traumatic, split-brained experience in the world, and it destroys the emotional safety net that we believe in.

Joy (00:54:47):

We believe in the U.S. Constitution. We believe in our law officers. We believe that we are safe and we pay money to hire public safety officers to help us. We pay money to all of you elected officials who are on this county and city boards and all of our bureaucrats. We pay you to fix... to provide for the public safety, not to build public safety buildings. Not to buy armoring. Not to buy more equipment.

Joy (00:55:20):

Do you know what? Over the last 20 years that I have lived in... I've been here longer than that. I've been here 45 years. Over the 45 years that I've lived in Whatcom County, I have watched social services

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

go down the drain. I've watched public housing go down the drain. I've watched addiction recovery programs go down the drain.

Joy (00:55:38):

I actually interviewed Irene Morgan one day. She's lived here for 70 years, working in social services. And I couldn't believe the stories that I was hearing when I was sitting in the Incarceration Prevention Reduction Taskforce meetings. And I would listen to the bureaucrats and the officials tell us over and over again, "Oh, we have this little... We have this program and we have that program and yes, we've already done liens. And yes, we've got the court... the mental health program."

Joy (00:56:04):

You know what? We have token programs. They do not suffice. We need hundreds of people going into mental health treatment programs. We need hundreds of people being helped with job re-skilling and job recovery programs. We need a serious conference and it has to be not run by the elected officials who are top down. You have ranked. And people are terrified to speak to you.

Joy (00:56:32):

In fact, what we need, is we need a community redevelopment conference. I can help run it. So can other people, that are people in this community. And you know, who needs to be speaking? It needs to be all of those nonprofits that you guys are not funding because you know? We don't get. If we're not funded, if we don't have a contract with the county... I was told this by one of the county council member. I don't... I didn't get to speak. The RCC didn't get to speak at any of these meetings.

Joy (00:56:59):

You know, why not? For any length of time. Three minutes. Sure. We get to drip stuff in and we get to send everybody emails. And we get to think that we participate. But you know what? We don't honestly get to do a report or deliver to the county council. You know why? Because we don't have a contract. People who... Nonprofits who have a contract, they get to do full on reports to the county about issues. We didn't get that.

Joy (00:57:24):

So anyway, I could talk for obviously a while.

Moonwater (00:57:28):

Joy, I-

Joy (00:57:29):

I'm done. [crosstalk 00:57:31] Can I summarize one sentence?

Moonwater (00:57:32):

Please. Yes, please.

Joy (00:57:35):

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

The only way we're going to get through the mess of the next three years, because we have at least a three to five year lag time in our problems. We have serious economic development problems in the community and the only way you're going to get through it... Officials, I don't envy you. You're in deep, deep, deep dodo. The only way is that if you pay some of us in the community to run an honest-to-God, public innovation conference via, Zoom. I've even got... I've got whole strategies on how we can get it done.

Joy (00:58:08):

But you have got to listen. Learn to listen to people, give you honest solutions and then let these people talk to each other and figure out how to organize. How to get it done so that everybody gets a fair shake. Because you know what? Nonprofit people, homeless people, people who are broken, they've had to learn to survive in deep trouble and they can help each other. And you guys should just listen and give us a chance to show you how we can do economic development differently in Whatcom County and fund change. So that's what I got to say.

Moonwater (00:58:44):

Thank you, Joy.

Joy (00:58:45):

You bet.

Moonwater (00:58:45):

I appreciate you joining us tonight.

Joy (00:58:47):

Yep. Thanks.

Moonwater (00:58:48):

For sharing what you [crosstalk 00:58:50].

Joy (00:58:50):

and Moonwater, I really, honest to God... I am not... I get passionate and I sound angry, but I am... I'm heartbroken. We need to help each other. Not fight. Defunding is not the question. It's refunding. It's refunding public safety for the public's safety. That's what we need to do. Thank you.

Moonwater (00:59:15):

Joy, thank you for being here and I know you can't see me in this moment, but to you and all of our speakers, I appreciate everyone bringing their heart and passion and the love and care you all have for our community. And I know we have some other speakers this evening and thank you so much for joining us tonight.

Moonwater (00:59:34):

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

Cindy, I believe that you are next in the queue. If you can unmute yourself and share your video, if you'd like. Welcome.

Cindy (00:59:43):

Hi. Thank you very much. Can you hear me?

Moonwater (00:59:45):

Yes, we can. Welcome.

Cindy (00:59:46):

Great. Thank you. So I've been at all the sessions and I want to really acknowledge elected officials and pulling these together because this topic is about people and people are messy. This is not a clean, neat, have a checklist kind of thing. This is hard work.

Cindy (01:00:05):

And I want to particularly acknowledge the BIPOC speakers because I've learned so much. I hear the fatigue and I hear the strength and I hear the little elements of hope that like, will this be the time when people really hear us? And I just wanted to say that I'm so grateful for your contributions because listening to you, I now know things that I didn't know before and I've wanted a lot to help. And I think to know how to help in the right way you need to listen. So I just... one, I'm grateful for these sessions. I really want to acknowledge the BIPOC speakers and I look forward to whatever process may be put in place so that people like me and members of the community can continue to listen and learn.

Cindy (01:00:50):

And what I wanted to speak very briefly on is this idea of process. So if a house is on fire, we need to put it out, right? I mean the task at hand is on fire. If we want to build a house, then we want to be thoughtful and take the time because we have limited time, resources, and budget, right? So if we're going to build something, we want to make sure it's going to work. And so, Mayor Fleetwood, when I heard your comment in one of the sessions about being a process person, the way I heard you was, we're building something and we want to make sure that we do it right. So I want to really acknowledge and say that I support that.

Cindy (01:01:26):

The comment I want to make is that, even in something as complex as reallocation of funding for the police department, there is an element of urgency, a sense of urgency associated with that. And I feel like there's a path that's clear. Although I don't see it, I trust you're having the conversations, putting processes in place to figure out how we're going to do some of these things. But I think what might be missing is an escalation process. So in the first session I heard a woman speak of challenges that she had been raped. Her husband was... did not belong-

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [01:02:04]

Cindy (01:02:03):

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

She had been raped. Her husband did not belong near her school. Her daughter had dropped out of school. That's something that requires immediate attention. I also heard from one in the first call mention that the police department may have requested help from the Department of Homeland security. And in my mind that requires immediate attention because it would impact safety of our community members. So, I'll just close out my comments by saying I appreciate these sessions. I look forward to listening and learning from more of them in the future. And if there could be some sort of escalation process put in place, so that when folks have tried to work the process and their efforts haven't been successful, they have some place to go. Thank you very much.

Moonwater (01:02:43):

Thank you for joining us tonight, Cindy. I appreciate you being here. I believe we have Melissa next and Melissa, as we bring you in, if you can unmute yourself and share your video if you'd like. And if there are additional speakers who would like to share their perspective this evening to please use the raised hand function and we hope to hear from you shortly. Welcome, Melissa.

Melissa (01:03:09):

Hello? Can you hear me?

Moonwater (01:03:11):

Yes. We can hear you. It's a little faint, but we can hear you.

Melissa (01:03:15):

All right, I'll just get a little closer try not to show my nose nostrils too bad. So there's a few things... Again, hi welcome back to Melissa hour, that we need to address. First of all, I just wanted... I made a few notes of people before me. Tai's demands are especially, with of course my focus on the DV and child abuse, I wholeheartedly agree not serene. I thank you, I'm sorry. And thank you.

Melissa (01:03:52):

Lack of mental health care is huge here. I mean huge. My child who was involved in all this, my youngest, has ADHD and is on the spectrum. And I have yet in a year and a half to be able to get him proper mental health care at this point, I'm pretty sure that he is also bipolar. He is suicidal at times and severely depressed. I have tried before COVID Catholic community services canceled on me five times before I finally just gave up and stopped calling them. So, I mean it's nonexistent for children and that's where it starts. You know, that's where all of these problems manifest is something like this happens to a child like mine, and then everybody ignores it and says things like children are resilient. And then they turn into an adult pedophile who then abuses the children in my house and then I have to chase them off with a baseball bat, and then your cops arrest me for protecting myself. So yes, mental health care first people. First, first, first.

Melissa (01:05:01):

Second, we have absolutely no domestic violence services. I work in the same building as DVSAS. We pay our rent to them and they still can't help me. They have managed to get me \$45 to pay to our Sheriff's office so they'll walk across the aisle and hand my husband the divorce paperwork that our court system, after going on almost a year, hasn't touched and won't tell me why.

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

Melissa (01:05:27):

Yeah, not appropriate. Eric Ritchie and his office has decided that, well there again. So we're going to allow these people to be free and your officers are going to call me up and spend hours explaining to me how threatening me and hurting my children and harming me and raping me aren't against the law and how I'm all these things. That's great. Then we need to change the laws. Like what is the point of having police when I had a literal pedophile and rapists molesting several people in the area including my child, and I'm still in court a year and a half later, on an Assault 4 charge and that pedophile is free and roaming right now, just on parole. I have had more court time on me, than the actual pedophile and Eric Ritchie and his cronies are still insisting on holding me on an Assault 4, against my own rapist, when they won't of course get her for rape because apparently me being completely out of my mind and them driving me insane isn't enough.

Melissa (01:06:42):

So, on the heels of that, I am now tasked with going back to court for a misdemeanor charge to your courthouse that is not socially distant, you have nobody regulating the elevators, you cannot be [inaudible 01:06:57] in the hallway, the courtroom that we are in is the size of a bedroom, your judges aren't wearing their mask properly, your lawyers aren't wearing your mask properly, but you've suspended trials for felonies because it's unsafe. So, you've suspended the rights of people in prison to get a fair trial, constitutional rights, for the safety of people yet your most lowest crimes, misdemeanors, most of which including mine could be deferred for good behavior, could be... There's a million things you could be doing including video stuff, and you're not doing that and you're putting us all at risk by making us cram in there. I had seven... I had five people crammed into my elevator after I let two people go in one elevator because I didn't want to get in there, five people bombed into my elevator.

Melissa (01:07:48):

There was no, there is absolutely no way to stay safe. My roommate is going through chemotherapy. It is literally all I can do to keep her alive and she's the woman who took me in when your services failed me and she's going to die because you people insist on packing us into that government building and not listening to any of your own rules. This is unacceptable. You are killing the most marginalized people. And like I've said before, the only place I see that diversity, that all these people are begging for, that Mimi wants, that Nasreen wants, that Tai wants, that we all want in this area, it's all in our courthouse.

Melissa (01:08:29):

It's all in our jails, it's all in our courthouse, all of it. So you are forcing our most marginalized people to go into that. That's cool and risk infection for things like an Assault 4, which is the lowest. Driving on suspended, I mean this is unconscionable. I've already talked to a lawyer who already filed a complaint about it, and the jerk turned her around and he can't even get a meeting with anyone to address these issues. Your lawyers who are working there aren't even happy about this. This is not safe, this is not justice and this is not okay. I have already been in the system for a year and a half for a misdemeanor? That's not justice. Making me go in there repeatedly because you people can do your jobs right during a pandemic? That's not justice. You're going to kill my roommate, you're going to kill my business because she owns Northwest Yarns and then we're going to be out of local business and I'm going to be homeless. And my best friend who saved my life is going to be dead for a misdemeanor charge that I shouldn't have even gotten.

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

Melissa (01:09:39):

This is disgusting. You're listening, but you're not hearing us. We are screaming for our lives. Very, very literally. I don't think you fully understand that black people and Latina and Lumbee and every minority, the gazed, the domestic violence victims, Joy talked about it. We are never heard. You do not listen to us. I was a respected member of my community for 10 years before this happened. And now, you people wouldn't even pee on me to put me out. I gave 10 years of my life to local businesses. I gave 10 years of my life to this community. I am well known and I am well respected in this community despite my tattoos and despite my aggressive behavior as a female which seems to be really upsetting to all you men. I was a respected member of this community and when the crap hit the fan, this community turned it's back on me, except for my friends. Can't get help anywhere.

Melissa (01:10:41):

I came here last month to address these issues, I got bounced back to the cops who assured me yet again that this is just how well it goes and there's nothing the state can possibly do more than they're already doing. So why exactly are we giving you millions of dollars then if you can't actually protect us? If you can't actually serve us when the actual crud hits the fan and your solution is to systematically arrest the marginalized minorities and the DVs, and we've done again, I reiterate several studies about that. You've got them pick an... the one everybody's going to mention tonight, and I am so glad everybody is mentioning that because you guys need to hear it over and over and over again. That was them getting caught.

Melissa (01:11:26):

That is not your police having an off day or a bad day. That's your cops getting caught. One of your bicycle cops when my son was nine years old, came up and harassed us. Addressing my nine year old son before me, because he's taller than he should be for his age and he's a little bit darker skin. This is a common, common occurrence with your police officers and I know that officer Doll and Katia Murphy really want to pretend like it's not, but it is. Because I talked to 80% of your police force and they've had the same problem. In fact officer Johnson who was involved in that, he made fun and mocked my daughter when they were molested. These are not individual one off cases. This is how they act all the time. They abuse you and torture you in the jail.

Melissa (01:12:15):

They mock you. They scream at mental health patients. They take you in and put you in a closet instead of putting you in a hospital where you belong. When you're having a mental health crisis, they terrorize you, you have permanent PTSD from one weekend. Ask me how I know. This is not the way you treat a community. This is not acceptable any longer. I want to know from our city council members, why you have repeatedly voted down us as an oversight committee?

Melissa (01:12:50):

Found out a little bit of info. We've actually been asking for this a lot longer than a lot of people on here probably know, and they have told us no before. We're not taking no for an answer this time. We demand a citizens oversight committee. It's demanded. You need it. We need it. You're killing us and we're not taking it anymore. I want better accountability. I'm going further up the chain. I'm going to

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

wind up in Olympia if you people don't start listening to us, I'm not kidding. We're dying out here and you're doing nothing. I will be back every time something new comes up. So see you guys next time.

Moonwater (01:13:30):

Melissa, thank you for joining us this evening. We really appreciate you sharing your perspective. Janice, are there additional folks in the queue right now? And I'll take this moment as well to invite additional speakers and recognizing that the intent this evening is to hear from our BIPOC community members and folks who have felt marginalized. We invite you to speak tonight. If you are with us in the waiting room and would like to use the raise hand function that will cue our tech team. If you have called in, you can press star nine and that will let us know that you would like to speak. And similarly, I'd like to check in with our remote locations again, to see if there's anyone there on site who would like to speak tonight. So I'll wait, just a moment to hear from Janice and invite those of you who are with us, who would like to share your perspective to use the raise hand function. Thank you everyone.

Janice (01:14:52):

We have Eric, and yeah.

Moonwater (01:15:00):

Thank you. Eric can you unmute yourself and welcome here you are.

Eric Takuchi Wallace (01:15:07):

Hello. My name is Eric Takuchi Wallace. I'm a fourth generation Japanese American. I moved to Bellingham in 2000 when I was 10 years old and I've mostly been here ever since. This is what I consider my hometown. So I feel like I have a pretty big stake in the things that happen here. To start off, I have a few questions for the mayor and the County executive. You don't have to like verbally respond, but just like a yes or a no will do. I'm just curious if you have read through the Vera report from 2017? Okay. And so you're aware of what it says in that report in regards to disparities, in terms of policing or jailing rates for different minorities in Whatcom County. I'm curious if there is a followup to that report that is being planned to see if we've made progress on that. For people who are unaware of what I'm talking about, you can very easily just google Whatcom Vera report, V-E-R-A to find this document. It's a PDF which details a study that was made on the Whatcom County Jail. And it reports that black folks in Whatcom County are jailed at a rate of 4.2 times their population. If I'm reading the data correctly, I'm not a statistician so not a hundred percent sure on that, Native Americans are jailed at 3.7 times and Hispanic are jailed 3.7 times as well and that's an average between Bellingham proper, Whatcom County, Lynden, Ferndale, Sumas et cetera. In different towns in Whatcom County.

Eric Takuchi Wallace (01:17:38):

Another thing I'm curious about, and also just want to share with people who are watching and wanting to learn more is the on police reform from July where they do a bit of an update just based on some number crunching on what the Bureau report expands on. So I'm just curious again, if the mayor and the executive have seen that document and the numbers that are reported there? You can nod. Yes, no, yes and no.

Eric Takuchi Wallace (01:18:21):

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

So in this document, it doesn't seem that much progress has been made in Bellingham. I guess it's a mixed bag. In Bellingham proper American Indians or Alaskan natives are jailed at 25.8% higher rate than their white counterparts living in Bellingham and black or African American are jailed at 19.01% and that's in Bellingham proper, not county average and as a tax paying citizen and an educator who lives in Whatcom County I find this to be unacceptable. Bellingham has a long history of racist action, as I'm sure County executive especially knows this town has not always been kind to non-white people in the 1950s. It was a sort of haven for the KKK. They ran the sick people out of town. They... It was a sundown town for a while, I've personally experienced racism in Bellingham and I know of pretty much everyone, every other POC or BIPOC that I know and I'm friends with has also experienced racism.

Eric Takuchi Wallace (01:19:59):

So I think it's time to sort of pop the Bellingham bubble of us thinking that racism doesn't exist in this town. I'm sure the people watching have had that bubble popped by now, but we need to stop just playing lip service to this and actually start taking action. As someone who's lived here for 20 years, grew up here, it's not been a conversation that a lot of my white friends have been willing or able to have in the past. And I think this Movement for Black Lives has really pushed us to make changes. And I think it's important for us to take the context of this movement overall and move it into the issues that specifically affect Whatcom County. If you look at the demographics of Whatcom County, the major minority ethnic groups in this County are Latino... Latinex, Indian and the Lummi, Native American people. And tying everything that the Black Lives Matter movement together with what's happening and what has been happening in Whatcom County, we have a long history of exploiting immigrant farm workers in this County.

Eric Takuchi Wallace (01:21:36):

So I just want to make sure we bring that context of what historically has happened locally and what is happening locally and make sure that that's a part of the conversation and how we move forward. And again, I encourage people to check out those documents that I mentioned the Vera report from 2017 and the resolution on police reform from the Whatcom Democrats. Also, if you are someone who's lived here for a long time or a newcomer, Western actually has a really great timeline for Bellingham history on race relations. There's always room to expand on stuff. This could be a better resource, but again, you can really quickly find any of these things just by googling them. So the last document is the Bellingham racial history timeline, and that will give you a great overview of racist actions that have happened in Bellingham. And yeah, I want to say thank you for all the BIPOC people who have talked throughout these listening sessions, everything you say resonates a lot with me being someone who grew up here, I really appreciate you standing up and saying something. And that's all I have to say.

Moonwater (01:23:10):

Thank you so much for joining us this evening Eric, and for sharing these resources with listeners. Thank you for being here. And Janice, I believe we have someone else in the queue and for those listening again, if you would like to speak, please use the raised hand function if you're joining us by video in zoom and you may press star nine if you've joined us by phone. Janice, do we have someone else in the queue for us this evening?

Janice (01:23:37):

Yes, we have Julian.

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

Moonwater (01:23:40):

Is that Julie?

Janice (01:23:41):

Julian.

Moonwater (01:23:42):

Julian welcome.

Amy (01:23:45):

Hi, Julian's right there, am his partner Amy.

Moonwater (01:23:48):

Hello, welcome Amy. Thank you for joining us.

Amy (01:23:53):

Yeah, I decided I was going to speak tonight. I wasn't a hundred percent sure about it, but as moon water as you know, I've been helping Seth and it's like the kind of background process of this and our effort to try and make it a lot more accessible. And so I've also been tuning into all the sessions and as they're starting to wrap up, my only concern is that maybe we don't have everything we need for the budget. And Seth you've been really like secluding very... I guess fleeting with information about the budget. And that really concerns me because the budget is going to impact the entire community for two years. And right now you have the ability to make it accessible and helpful to the entire community and we are currently begging you to spend the money that is necessary to fund our hospitals and our schools and to make our community better.

Amy (01:24:59):

And we're currently pleading with you to give the community more money to self-govern and defend ourselves. And I have not heard any sort of confirmation or any real input from you. And that worries me. Are you understanding the information that we are giving to you? Are you processing that information? Are you processing our stories and our grievances to actually create a better Bellingham? Are you willing to fund a better Bellingham is my real question and greatest concern. As a member and leader in Stand Speak Listen, we are currently working on more followups with the same remote locations that we helped to set up for the system series to do a followup conversation. And we want you Seth, and you [inaudible 01:25:56] to be available to come into the community, to engage with these conversations. So we can all together build a successful budget. And I really want to know that the time and energy I put into helping you with this listening series is going to be reciprocated.

Amy (01:26:17):

So I really hopped on tonight was can we, as Bellingham, as members of Stand Speak Listen who put ourselves available for you to help you launch this, do we have you on our side? Are you willing to now come join us to create a better Bellingham together? Yeah, I don't know if you want to answer to that

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

now or accepting invitation now so we don't waste a lot more of our time. If that's something you're willing to commit to doing with us and letting the community of Bellingham be a part of the budget.

Moonwater (01:26:54):

I see mayor Fleetwood nodding. I recognize we have some limitations in who can be muted and unmuted at any one time, but Amy thank you so much for joining us and for the work that you've been doing to support outreach for these sessions. We appreciate you joining us and speaking tonight. Janice I understand that we have someone else in the queue. Who may that be?

Janice (01:27:27):

Yes. Rosa Linda.

Moonwater (01:27:29):

Okay Rosa Linda. Welcome. If you can unmute yourself and if you have video this evening and would like to share that you may do that as well.

Rosalinda (01:27:52):

Hi. Good afternoon everybody.

Moonwater (01:27:54):

Hi Rosalinda welcome.

Rosalinda (01:27:55):

I've had some technical difficulties for some reason I kept being dropped off.

Moonwater (01:27:59):

You're good now.

Rosalinda (01:28:01):

Are there other folks waiting to speak or is the rest of the public... Have they spoken?

Moonwater (01:28:08):

So Rosa Linda, I'm going to, I'm working with Janice behind the scenes here, continually inviting folks to indicate if they'd like to speak. So folks are doing that periodically. So you are welcome to share your perspective this evening. And we're just asking that folks be mindful of time but the floor is yours.

Rosalinda (01:28:29):

So I just wanted to speak because this is the last of the planned listening sessions for the community. And I want to say again that I want to honor the Black Lives Matter activists that actually have called attention to race issues of racial, well basically structural racism across our country. That it's so deep when it goes on a national level and there are structures that have been built in that were mimicking even at the local level of Whatcom and Skagit County. This is really a very serious deep issue. And I'm one of those people, and my organization is one of those organizations that has been trying to call

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

attention to racial profiling and the racist structure and trying to create systemic change in Whatcom County and in the city of Bellingham.

Rosalinda (01:29:25):

So I understand the processes that exist, at least the overview of the processes that exist, and familiar with some of the details we have tried to approach City and County government using the process that exists. It's become very clear that those processes that currently exist for people to access justice that are Brown and black do not function for us. And I acknowledge now to you that I know that they don't function on purpose. There's a reason why they don't function for us. They have been created that way.

Rosalinda (01:30:00):

I've heard tonight. I want to thank all of the people in the community that have given their testimony. I have given my testimony many many times. I'm an immigrant farm worker that grew up in Skagit County working in the fields, that's all my family. But I'm an organizer first and an advocate for my community to try to save their lives and give them opportunity both economic, cultural, and educational opportunities. And the structural barriers for Brown and black people in Whatcom County and in one Skagit County also actually, and in Bellingham are really hard to overcome. Some of us can and do, but that doesn't make it fair and it doesn't make it right, it doesn't mean that the structural racist of systems don't continue to exist, they do.

Rosalinda (01:30:51):

And overcoming them is almost like a superhuman effort and it's not right. It shouldn't be like that. I've been hearing that, not just for me, [inaudible 01:31:02] and Seth, and I hope that the City Council members and the County Council members are listening because this is something my organization and farm workers and immigrant workers have been bringing to City Council meetings for years. And sometimes I'm made to think that I'm the only one complaining, that I'm a whiner and definitely too radical and sometimes called communistic and all kinds of other words. I know that you don't do it, but other folks have, it is a truth. It's what exists in Whatcom County and in Bellingham. And it hasn't stopped. Hasn't even slowed down a little bit with all the activism that we have taken action, all the activism we have moved with our community forth.

Rosalinda (01:31:47):

So let me just say that, we believe even then in spite of all of this, we're holding onto a thread of hope that this is going to make a difference for our community longterm in a structural difference. Something that will remain in place so others can use it. Others can access it to defend themselves, and hopefully they'll come a time when they don't have to defend themselves because things will actually change. So I still have hope in spite of that. I have seen other cities across the country are attempting this effort also, and I'm willing to be an active participant in trying to create that change.

Rosalinda (01:32:34):

My community has not wanted to participate in this listening session still, until they see action and change. So here I am and I don't know if there are City Council members and County Council members listening, but I know that a City Council member I believe it was Mr. Knutson spoke publicly at a radio

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

station saying that there would not be any budget changes without the City Council's permission. So I know that this is an effort

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:33:04]

Rosalinda (01:33:03):

So I know that this is an effort that's going to have to involve the council members be participating in making those changes. It is disheartening to hear other people say, bring the incidents of Chief [Doll 01:33:16] in the way that he responds to community complaints, but also to his own officers being racist and not following ... not being equitable and fair and just as police officers. I just want to mention that it was for me, very disrespectful to hear that the white supremacists walking the streets of Bellingham with guns backed off only after Chief Doll talked to them and, then told people of color that they shouldn't worry anymore because he had conversations with them and they were not going to be doing that anymore. And if they did, they weren't going to shoot anybody. That is not the problem. This is not what we're asking for.

Rosalinda (01:34:05):

We don't want a savior, a white savior like Chief Doll, taking care of certain incidents and quote unquote, protecting us. We want the police to actually protect people, everybody, every time for whatever reason is needed. This whole idea of white savior is existing, in Linden they called them angels, that you can have that, that passport is very real. In Linden, they call it angels. If you identify a white angel to guard you and to take care of you in the community, you can have opportunity, you can get jobs, you can be left alone, but some white person has to respond for you that you're okay. That you're one of the good ones. This exists. It's very real. There are changes that have to happen culturally, changes that have to happen by policy and regulation and changes that have to happen in the charter and structurally so that they remain permanent.

Rosalinda (01:35:05):

So at the crux of this, in my opinion, and in my people's opinion, the base of the barriers to create these cultural changes, to create policy changes, to create government structural changes is law enforcement. They are the first line of communication when there's trouble. And based on how they respond is how people of color, black and brown people will respond to governance and to you and to the councils and everybody, because they set the tone culturally and also [regulatorily 01:35:52] about how brown and black people, what their places and how they belong within the social and police structures or the governance structures of the county and the city. If we don't deal with law enforcement and how they treat brown and black people immediately, we are not going to be able to make the changes necessary, to really have racial equity in Whatcom County and in the city of Bellingham.

Rosalinda (01:36:24):

They are the very first issue that has to be addressed. Every time an officer takes actions like what they did with this poor helpless person, as a joke, they need to be fired publicly. There has to be action immediately when something wrong is happening. And I understand about the process of having a fair of the equitable improve it ... has to have proof that it happened. The proof is there, but no action is being taken. If Chief Doll and even including sheriff Elfo, we have not had enough input about the sheriff's deputies or the sheriff, the county police, and how they're behaving. They need to understand

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

that when they back up this kind of behavior, they are telling brown and black people, this ... it's okay for you to be treated this way. It's an exceptional action. It's not an everyday action. Therefore, we're not going to do anything.

Rosalinda (01:37:27):

I believe that law enforcement, I said it before, cannot and should not be part of decision making when it comes to governance, there has to be a structural change with that. Law enforcement should be available when needed, when called, not for every single little thing that happens in the city and in the county. And what I've heard from these listening sessions is that there are people that care and people that want to be involved to create this change, but they're not trusting that we're ... that the governance structures of the city and the county are really going to make that change. I know that the willingness is there and the intention is there, but it's going to count when the time comes to take actions to change some of these things. And the budget is a big area that has to be addressed.

Rosalinda (01:38:24):

And I believe it can be addressed in a way that makes sense, that will continue to protect the community. I mean, several people that said it, I said it, this is a militarized county. Law enforcement is way over the top of what's needed in Whatcom County. The jails and the courts are the most diverse spaces in the county and the city. What does that tell you? They exist to come after brown and black people. That is what their job is. That's what it looks like. And it's more than what it looks like. It's what ends up happening. So this has to be addressed. This has to be a process that's ongoing and permanent, but the processes for, this is the last thing I'm going to say, processes exist in the county and the city government right now to create solutions to problems brought to you. And I'm going to mention the immigration advisory board right now.

Rosalinda (01:39:29):

Just because processes exist does not mean that they're functioning, those processes are functioning the way they should be functioning. And that's something that needs to be looked at. All of these advisory boards and task forces, how they interact with the actual change and shift in structure, in this case the immigrant population in Whatcom County. How is that process being held accountable? Because we're participating in that. And we're feeling very frustrated right now with that process, but we're still trying. You see what I mean? We try on our end, we're asking you now to try on your end, it doesn't work all the time. And if it doesn't work, we need to shift it.

Rosalinda (01:40:20):

The relationship between federal law enforcement and local law enforcement is becoming even more critical as you can see with the current administration and how the current administration is using federal law, enforced federal enforcement with local law enforcement. And I want to ask the question, if the federal government sends Homeland security, [Blaine 01:40:47] has one of the largest sector chiefs and sector stations in the country to contain protestors in Bellingham and in Whatcom County. And if that Homeland security officers call on sheriff Elfo and local law enforcement to assist them in containing protestors in Whatcom County, are they going to refuse that request? Do we know that they will refuse that request? I don't. What I have seen from the county sheriff and local law enforcement is they cooperate very well with Homeland security. And I have a big concern right now about what the governance structure is and the policy and the regulatory structure is to stop local law enforcement

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

from collaborating with Homeland security, to come after peaceful protesters, demanding change in Whatcom and Bellingham.

Rosalinda (01:41:46):

This is one of the biggest reasons I'm involved because I'm worried for my community. I'm worried and concerned that local law enforcement is really not a peacekeeping force anymore in Whatcom and Bellingham. It is a controlling force of power and a powerful force that has impacted our culture, our ability to do well economically, and our ability to educate ourselves so that we can be fully participating in this society in Whatcom and in Bellingham. It is affecting and impacting brown and black people's wellbeing. So thank you for this opportunity. I'm grateful that so many people were able to bring their stories and communicate with you. I am grateful to them for doing it because I know how hard and how difficult that is. Somebody mentioned that that is, sharing these experiences is a gift. And I know that we've talked about this before you have received a gift, treat it with dignity and grace and give something back, give something back to the community. Thank you for listening to me, because I could go on for a long time also. Thank you.

Moonwater (01:43:19):

Rosa Linda, thank you so much for being here this evening and sharing your perspective with us tonight. We appreciate it deeply. I believe now at this point, we have the opportunity for some closing remarks from executive [Sidhu 01:43:37] and Mayor Fleetwood. So, Mayor Fleetwood, would you like to begin?

Mayor Fleetwood (01:43:42):

I think [inaudible 01:43:43] was going to go first. We'd discuss this, I think he's first go.

Moonwater (01:43:48):

Executive Sidhu. Can you unmute yourself?

Executive Sidhu (01:43:57):

There. Can you hear me?

Moonwater (01:44:00):

We sure can. The floor is yours. Thank you.

Executive Sidhu (01:44:03):

All right. Let me just, first of all, I would like to thank the [inaudible 01:44:18] chairman Solomon and president Randhawa of Western Washington university for, and their institution to join with our city and county in this exercise. When we started this conversation between myself and Seth and we wanted to bring in because Western has 12000 youth, future of our country, which they come there, we thought it's very important for them to participate in same [inaudible 01:44:57] representing the tribe. And we appreciate that, that they expressed. In addition to that, there were several other organizations Whatcom human right task force, as well as Stand Speak and Listen and a few other people, I don't remember everybody's names, that they were able to come and express their inner feelings about the government system, which has embedded racism and privileges for few.

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

Executive Sidhu (01:45:38):

And I think that it is important. I know that it may not be perfect, but we believe that it was very fruitful. And I give my thanks to all the speakers for all these four series, four different sessions who actively came, participated and helped us to expand the audience. And, we totally appreciate their help in making this a better event. At the same time, there have been a lot of personal, painful stories from our community members. We heard about the parents struggling to raise their children, children of color, lack of opportunities, lack of welcoming spaces like community centers for the kids. Like we have senior centers, I think that's a great idea that we should have some kind of common spaces for parents and kids of all ... just not only exclusively for a BIBOC, but a common place for all people to be able to come and share that space.

Executive Sidhu (01:47:08):

I personally shared briefly my own painful story in this community for my own kids in this context. I think that we do need that, that we hold our law enforcement accountable. We need to increase transparency, and we need to add some level of civilian oversight. I think that in this kind of oversight, I would like to see that minorities, people of color, indigenous people, have a more prominent place in this oversight, same as that farm workers, Rosalinda has done, has dedicated her life to these issues and immigration issues. We just heard from her. I think it's important that those things should be taken into account and see what are the things we can do.

Executive Sidhu (01:48:28):

Now, I will touch a bit on the budget priorities and investing public funds. And I know that just, we heard Julian mentioning that, let's just invest in schools and invest in hospitals and things. I think there's a little more than that, that we, as a taxpayer, carriers of the tax dollars from the public have very tight walls around us, where we can spend money, where we cannot spend money. [inaudible 01:49:11] skews, but with another system, the process, I think that we can definitely do in certain areas where we can make the changes. I mean, this has to be a two way conversation between community members and the elected leaders.

Executive Sidhu (01:49:33):

And I think that city council members have been very diligent in listening to the cities. I've seen a couple of Whatcom County members in a couple of sessions, but they have not been participating as much as city people have been. I think it was from Tess who said that, or maybe [Nasreen 01:50:06] that people are oblivious to the colored people. I think that my observation is generally, the Americans are very oblivious to the rest of the world. In Whatcom County, we are right next to Canada, if you ask somebody who is the premier of BC, British Columbia, they have no idea. They have no idea how the British Columbia government works. I mean, we being right 10 miles away. We should have some knowledge. We don't even teach in our schools. We don't even care about that.

Executive Sidhu (01:50:49):

I have listened to a lot of adults, educated people and they call them, or the governor of BC or whatever you call them, this is their second thing or governor of BC or whatever you call them. So it is the height of oblivious that people are. And I think that we would like to see both police to hire more people of

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

color and give them some preferences to the young people and few other things. I think I won't take a lot more time. I'll stop here. And once again, thank you. Thank you everybody for participating in this.

Moonwater (01:51:39):

Thank you executive Sidhu. Mayor Fleetwood.

Mayor Fleetwood (01:51:45):

Thank you. [inaudible 01:51:46], executive Sidhu. It's been a pleasure collaborating with you on this. I know we're going to be collaborating more. I share all of the observations that you expressed and share in your thanks to our various partners and the participants and the speakers. I know that this experience has been met with, having a listening series with a wide variety of feelings and thoughts. I want to say, just personally, it's been very positive and important for me. I've learned a great deal. We've built a lot of relationships that we wouldn't have built otherwise. We've expressed a lot of commitments to do this work. I know it's frustrating for some and understandably so that we would be earnestly involved at this moment in time. Some people have expressed the view that why haven't you started something before? It seems to be the nature of movements and momentum.

Mayor Fleetwood (01:53:02):

And I'm reminded of John Lewis' comments shortly before he died about how this movement now, and I know I've expressed this before, but this movement now at this time is very distinct from the movement he was involved in 50, 60 years ago. He was of the opinion that now it's much broader and it's much more inclusive. And I can't imagine that this is going to die out until we see real change. So I look forward to seizing this moment. I think the heart and soul of the work that we're going to do is going to involve taskforce work. I look forward to collaborating with a variety of partners, including executives Sidhu in the coming days and weeks as we organize what that taskforce work would be, would look like. And obviously it's going to do this very difficult work of looking at policies and procedures and practices that make up structural racism and the complicated work of dismantling it.

Mayor Fleetwood (01:54:17):

I know we're going to learn a great deal from other organizations and institutions and people nationwide. This is going on in thousands of cities all over the country. So I think this is an important time. And of course, as we work on this taskforce work, we're going to work with the people who've spoken and offer all kinds of helpful suggestions about how we proceed. On a more immediate level, there are a variety of things that I look forward to working with the city council on, and again, others, I can imagine the number of short term tasks that we embark upon. Of course, budget. Amy asked the question of whether I'm willing to work to make a better Bellingham. Of course, we all are. I look forward to working with the council in the coming weeks and months as we go about budget making, this is a biennial budget year.

Mayor Fleetwood (01:55:23):

We have to deliver an approved biannual budget by the city council by December. I know that there's going to be broad agreements, and I think we're going to see a demonstrated commitment to among many other things, expanding behavioral health in our city. I look forward to working with the council on how we go about defining that in detail. There is interest in making the budget process more

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

understandable and more transparent. I know there are council members that have ideas about how we can do that. I know we're going to create all sorts of public opportunities for people to learn and express their views on the budget, and will be identifying and publicly announcing those kinds of opportunities again in the coming weeks. The context again is me needing to deliver a budget to the council by October 1st. And I will be doing that.

Mayor Fleetwood (01:56:32):

And the council in the months of October and November and December actively working on it. And that's going to be very much a public process. As it relates to civilian oversight, I think there's going to be civilian oversight. And the question is going to be how we define that. There's lots of models to be considered. I know there's going to be an active conversation in this community. Generally and on the part of the city council specifically, I look forward to offering what assistance I can from a Bellingham staff perspective when we engage in those conversations. There's a variety of things that we can be doing around evictions. So this came up, concern about evictions and the governor lifting the moratorium in the near term. I think I'd like to propose that we embark on comprehensive eviction protection measures during this window of time before the governor's moratorium ends, that a lot of conversation around critically examining practices and policies in criminal justice.

Mayor Fleetwood (01:57:54):

I've heard a lot of people talking about the national center for policing equity. I know that there's going to be conversations around that. I look forward to enlisting the help from that organization. There's a number of ideas that formulate a roadmap for new models of improved public safety. I recognize that there's going to be discussions around that. It happens to be the case that there's a residential survey that the city commissions every two years. There's a real effort to improve that residential survey so that it's more reflective of our community. In the past, it pretty much asked questions only of homeowners. And we're improving that survey demographically so that it will be more representative of our entire community.

Mayor Fleetwood (01:58:51):

So lots of work that's going to be done in this fall. And it's going to be ongoing. As a number of speakers have pointed out, we are at this point in time building a foundation, and it's going to be building a foundation on which a lot of really important work is done. I look forward to collaborating with so many different people and organizations and groups, and of course our city council, executive Sidhu, you and I will be talking in the coming days as I said. So that's it for me now. Listening series is not over, there'll be other opportunities. This first iteration of four is done. I want to thank everybody for participating. And again, thank you, [MoonWater 01:59:52] as well.

Moonwater (01:59:55):

Thank you, Mayor Fleetwood. Thank you executive Sidhu, and thank you everyone for joining us this evening and throughout this series. Thank you tonight to our interpreters, to city and county staff, and to each of you who have offered feedback and suggestions or otherwise brought your wisdom and energy to the planning and outreach for these sessions. It's been an honor to work with each of you. More listening, more dialogue and more collaborative efforts will be needed as we move forward as a community. And I thank you in advance to each of you for helping to shape our future together. As I shared before, additional feedback continues to be warmly welcomed, and can be provided to the

August 18, 2020
Community Listening Series on Race and Justice

mayor's office at mayorsoffice@cob.org and the executives' office at executiveatco.whatcom.y.us.
Thank you all again and good night.