



Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Commission

City of Bellingham

January 17, 2024

Zoom Only Meeting Due to Weather

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Mayor Kim Lund.

Attendance

Present: Louise Bjornson (Birchwood), Mary Lou White (Birchwood), Lindsey Payne Johnstone (City Center), Sheryl Russell (City Center), Deb Valentine (Columbia), John LaSpina (Cordata), Nick Kelly (Cornwall), William Beer (Edgemoor), Barbara Zielstra (Edgemoor), William Liddicoet (Fairhaven), Jan Dietzgen (Fairhaven), Jake Charlton (Happy Valley), Jane Campbell (King Mountain), Doug Gustafson (Puget), April Markiewicz (Samish), Jack Wellman (Sehome), Kerri Burnside (Silver Beach), Christopher Grannis (South), Michael Chrastowski (South Hill), Annie Sorich (Sunnyland), Gabrielle Laipenieks (WWU), Chris Roselli (WWU) and Colin Beazley (York).

City Representatives: Mayor Kim Lund and Janice Keller, Interim Deputy Administrator/Communications Director

MINUTES

Opening Comments

- Mayor provided a severe weather shelter update including the addition of a temporary daytime warming center hosted by the City and staffed by City and Bellingham School leaders and Opportunity Council staff, and thanked all who helped make it possible. Mayor acknowledged that there were many people who reached out from the community wanting to help and she explained why the City depends on the Bellingham School District's leadership team for the experience and training (background check, Narcan training, de-escalation training and a trauma informed approach) that is necessary for the volunteers to have to provide a safe, healthy experience for the guests.
 - o Road2Home provides extensive training, and they have a need right now for additional volunteers.

Approval of April – November 2023 Meeting Minutes

- Janice noted some of the edits that had been emailed prior to the meeting.
- Birchwood added an edit to the May minutes and Janice noted the change.
- April Markiewicz moved to approve, Chris Roselli 2nd motion, Motion Carried.
- Staff are in place to provide timely minutes moving forward.

Neighborhood Round Table

- **Birchwood**

Very concerned with out of country operation that wants to bring out of country metal discards. Very concerned about the noise, air, and water pollution and the road damage the trucks will be doing across the city. Birchwood is a Victory Garden Neighborhood that grows and gathers food for distribution in neighborhood food boxes.

- **City Center**

They have 3 major goals for 2024 – increasing visitors to downtown, influencing the perception of safety in downtown, and continuing to connect with businesses and advocating for their voices with City officials and leadership.

- **Columbia**

They have expanded their board and appreciate hearing about the successes neighborhoods have had with Small and Simple Grants.

- **Cordata**

They had their board meeting and also served food, which was successful, and they discussed summer activities at Cordata Park as they would like to take advantage of the pavilion and the proposed stage. At the last meeting, they did a presentation about Neighborhood Association accomplishments and explained what the board responsibilities are.

- **Cornwall**

They are having their meeting next week and they are very appreciative of the Small and Simple Grant for their neighborhood signs.

- **Edgemoor**

The neighborhood is celebrating its 20th anniversary of formation. They are very grateful for the Small and Simple Grants and the neighborhood signs have increased communication in the neighborhood. They also have neighborhood signs that say Protect Mud Bay Flats Cliffs for awareness and education for the proposed housing development and the impacts it will have on the Mud Bay Flat environment for salmon and herons.

- **Fairhaven**

They will have their annual plant sale on March 30th 10:00-3:00. They continue to work on their Small and Simple Grant identifying the trees and shrubs that will be planted.

- **Happy Valley**

They had their monthly meeting last week and held elections. The Community Meals were discussed, and they are trying to find chefs for April and May. They would like to find a way to distribute the information received from Greg Hope, Office of Emergency Management, to the neighbors.

- **King Mountain**

They are grateful for the Small and Simple Grant as they are trying to increase communication within their neighborhood. They would like the City to provide a tool to assist the neighborhoods in connecting with the diversity of neighbors as they have encountered some language barriers and would like to have better communication within the whole neighborhood. They would like to preserve the tracks of forest in their neighborhood and are in the stage of preserving their trees, not planting trees. There is a stretch of James Street that is narrow and very hazardous, yet there are no plans for development to make it safe. They have been working with Public Works and receiving the same message of “it’s too expensive to fix” and yet everyone wants it to be safe.

- **Puget**

There hasn't been a lot of activity in the neighborhood since COVID. Homelessness is getting worse every year and more people are becoming homeless. HomesNow operates in Fairhaven and in the Puget Neighborhood and the City could consider more of these types of options.

- **Samish**

Nothing new to report for the neighborhood. April commented to the group that she had to spend \$20,000 removing dead trees that were in a Greenway space behind her house because they were endangering her house. Her opinion is that it is not necessarily beneficial to increase street trees unless the City takes active measures to take care of them.

- **Sehome**

Thank you for the Small and Simple Grant, which they installed neighborhood boundary signs. In this upcoming year, they would like to work with Greg Hope from the Office of Emergency Management on emergency preparedness for the neighborhood.

- **Silver Beach**

They would like to invite the Mayor to any of the upcoming neighborhood meetings that she can make. They had their meeting last week and traffic was discussed. Neighbors are frustrated with addressing the excessive speed, lack of flashing lights, and concerns about parcels with storm drains that feed directly into the watershed. They are hoping to revitalize the neighborhood plan and looking for advice on how to get people engaged in Engage Bellingham.

- **South**

Their next meeting is in a couple of weeks. The neighborhood is very interested in the Chuckanut Creek Estuary/Mud Flats Mud Bay Cliffs and would like to see it saved.

- **South Hill**

They are continuing education related to ABC Recycling and they are encouraging everyone to stay informed because it is a citywide issue. They would like to see a future MNAC Meeting dedicated to this topic because there is some misinformation out there.

- **Sunnyland**

Food was served at their last meeting, and they had a good turn out, so they will be serving food at the next meeting. They are gearing up for their 3rd Annual Earth Day Celebration on April 20th.

- **WWU**

The Martin Luther King Jr. Day event was a beautiful event and the partnership and support from the City is very much appreciated. Western Today newsletter shows all the events at WWU. Thank you to Public Works for SeeClickFix. Students are going down to Olympia to lobby on President's Day.

Open Discussion re: Elements of MNAC most meaningful and suggestions for change:

Conversation on what elements this group finds most meaningful and helpful as well as what suggestions do you have for changes moving forward and how can we get more out of the meeting:

- Sehome: Appreciation for the City's support of the neighborhood and the \$750 annual neighborhood reimbursement. Would like the City to consider in-kind support. Example: they need to update their website, but nobody on the board knows how to do it, so maybe that's something the City could help with. There is also interest in being more engaged in the Bellingham Plan process; there hasn't been a structured engagement process with the neighborhoods. Would also like a practical solution to sharing information with the neighborhoods about notices received from the City. Enjoys hearing updates from City leaders. Would like to see a more structured time around a topic rather than the time it takes for the neighborhood round table. Would like the City to communicate what they need from the neighborhoods in order to make a good decision and ask questions and accept feedback.
- Birchwood MaryLou: Having a two-way conversation is appreciated and feels it has been missing from the meetings about important topics within the neighborhoods. Would like to second everything said about communication about what is happening in the City as well as shortening up the roundtable, so there's more time to engage on important topics. Would also appreciate hearing about ordinances that are coming up, so there's more engagement. Louise: Appreciates hearing from Department Heads on what's happening in the City. She enjoys the neighborhood reports but could possibly keep them shorter. It would also be nice to look at some important issues facing the City like ABC Recycling or the clear-cut proposal at the golf course.

- King Mountain: Adding a moderator involved in the meeting (for example: Mayor said 2 minutes for roundtable, but she's not sure if she spoke for 2 minutes or longer) so there's a better flow of communication and respecting people's time. She feels that the public process is quite difficult for accessibility, engagement and information being disseminated.
- Silver Beach: Would appreciate a moderator and 3-minute clock. Would also like the chat to be enabled so neighborhoods have an opportunity to make a few more comments and allow participants to ask questions. There is appreciation for how the Mayor has been trying to keep them on track. For a future agenda item, would like to see the Bellingham Plan discussed because the housing crisis has escalated.
- Cornwall: Very appreciative of the updates given from Department Heads and it is probably the most interesting thing to report back to the neighborhood.
- Samish: Communication is very important and she would like to talk to City staff about responsibilities regarding trees.
- Cordata: Likes hearing from other neighborhoods and how they are building community. He also likes hearing from Department Heads at meetings.
- City Center: Also appreciates hearing from the Department Heads. Would like for there to be updates on new projects going on in neighborhoods that include construction and what the process is surrounding projects. It seems like by the time it comes to neighborhoods for comment, it's almost done and not really open for comment.
- Happy Valley: Historically the roundtable works out as far as time goes without a person watching the clock or speaking with a timer. Appreciates the Mayor giving updates about what is happening around town and has enjoyed the Mayor showing up at neighborhood meetings.
- Edgemoor: Finds the meetings helpful and hearing what is happening in the neighborhoods, but she seconds that the roundtable could be done much more quickly and also enjoys having the staff come and give updates.
- Fairhaven: Introduced proposal of half the neighborhoods report monthly and it alternates so that it gives more time for the open engaged conversation is a good trade-off.

Closing Comments

Mayor and staff are discussing ways to have fun with more engagement with the neighborhood associations. Mayor would like to get the community block party trailer out to the neighborhoods dovetailing with their neighborhood meetings this spring and summer. The thought is to have City staff attend and join in games, food, and other engagement.

Mayor is honored and humbled to be able to do this work and considers MNAC as an instrumental group and conduit for communication from the community. Very much looking forward to conversations in the months and years ahead. There's much work to be done and it all matters. Thank you for being partners.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

The next meeting is February 21, 2024