



Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Commission City of Bellingham

March 15, 2023
Hybrid Meeting

Call to Order

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

Attendance

Present: Louise Bjornson (Birchwood), Cheryl Russell (City Center), Alice Clark (City Center), Kit Topaz (Columbia), John LaSpina (Cordata), Nick Kelly (Cornwall), William Beer (Edgemoor), Barbara Zielstra (Edgemoor), Jan Dietzgen (Fairhaven), Jake Charlton (Happy Valley), Tara Stavik (King Mountain), Susan Ryan (Lettered Streets), Molly Foote (Samish), Jack Wellman (Sehome), Jocelyn Lindsey (Silver Beach), Michael Chrzastowski (South Hill), Chris Roselli (WWU), Teagan Hudson (WWU), and Colin Beazley (York).

City Representatives: Mayor Seth Fleetwood, Janice Keller, Communications Director and Rebecca Mertzig, Police Chief

MINUTES

Addressing Issues in Downtown Bellingham

The Mayor opened with comments about downtown and the increased challenges since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Business owners and customers have expressed concerns about behaviors that are making them feel unsafe. There have been meetings with City staff and the Municipal Court Judge formulating some plans that the City felt was a coherent framework for improvements for downtown. The hope was that passing of the ordinance for Therapeutic Court and making open drug use of controlled substances a misdemeanor, would give Police a tool to disrupt the cycle of open drug use. The Mayor will be creating a solutions work group to find ways to improve downtown Bellingham.

Chief Mertzig addressed the jail restrictions, balance for compassion and accountability, and alternatives.

Discussion included comments on appreciation of the Mayor bringing this complicated issue to the City Council, the need increase business in downtown, downtown residents feel unsafe because of the drugs and crime, the drug use isn't just downtown, and next steps.

Small and Simple Grant Update

Reminder that the City is now receiving Small and Simple Grant applications and conducting Q&A sessions to help the neighborhoods with their proposals. Please pay particular attention to the guidelines.

Neighborhood Round Table

- **Birchwood**
They are working on the International Festival for this summer. Thank you to the police for helping out with the drugs and crime and helping the neighbors to feel safer.
- **City Center**
They are working on solutions that will make an impact on safety and trash for alleys downtown. April 11th is their neighborhood meeting, and they will present their proposals for events this year. There will be a bike ride and Wine Walk in May. Downtown Sounds is in July.

- **Columbia**
Trying to build their board.
- **Cordata**
Had their community meeting last night and it was well attended. Rebecca Judd came to talk about the North Bellingham Branch at the mall and Johnathan Schilk came to talk too about the Cordata Phase II development. They will be doing a Small and Simple Grant that involves neighborhood signs and kiosks in the parks as well as a July 8th community party.
- **Cornwall**
Still going through post-COVID and having a hard time getting people to the meetings.
- **Edgemoor**
They had their annual meeting, and it was well attended via Zoom with discussion on Mud Bay Cliffs. They are going to do a Small and Simple Grant for neighborhood signs.
- **Fairhaven**
The neighborhood Annual Plant Sale is on March 25th. May 3rd there will be an event – Hiding in Plain Sight; a discussion about mental health. They are thinking of creating a neighborhood watch that is not directed towards crime, but to watch out for those neighbors that need help.
- **Happy Valley**
Had their board meeting and planted some trees at Larrabee & 16th.
- **King Mountain**
They are also trying to get people involved in their meetings. Things are busy in the neighborhood with Van Wyck Park, a new school slated to break ground at the end of 2023 or early 2024, and growth in apartments on Telegraph and it's creating traffic issues.
- **Lettered Streets**
They have an official gardener approved by the Parks Department for the Gossage Garden. April 12th meeting will include a guest speaker, Carol Teshima, a researcher on the Japanese/American experience in Bellingham and everyone is invited.
- **Samish**
Having their general meeting next Wednesday and wondering why neighborhoods have member dues? Seems like there would be more engagement from the neighbors if the dues were eliminated.
- **Sehome**
They had their annual meeting and Lisa Anderson and Whatcom Housing Authority attended and it was a good meeting.
- **Silver Beach**
Things are quiet except they are having some North Shore Drive traffic issues including excessive speed and park access.
- **South Hill**
Thank you to the Police and everything they are doing about the homicide at Taylor Dock and Boulevard Park.
- **WWU**
April 6th there will be a discussion in Miller Hall on native residential schools in the region and Holocaust Museum has asked WWU to host their oldest longest running lecture series on April 7th about education's role in being complicit in Nazi propaganda in the 30's. Students are starting to work on Local Lobby Day.

- **York**

They have been trying to increase engagement within their neighborhood and creating more interesting topics for meetings. They had Chris Comeau come to a recent meeting about transportation and creating safe travel spaces and Nicole Oliver presented the work being done at Rock Hill Park.

Closing Comments:

Future topics: dues, I-5 expansion to 3 lanes, instruction on how to run a non-profit, legislative change in zoning (4-6 plex) and the environmental impacts, ABC Recycling noise, Greenways update, and general park plans.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

The next meeting will be April 19, 2023