

Mayor Kelli Linville started the meeting by reminding us that we have until the end of the year to claim our \$500 subsidy from the City of Bellingham.

Maritime Heritage Park

Darby Cowles from the Planning and Community Development office spoke about the City working hard to figure out how to “reclaim” Maritime Heritage Park. There have been a number of attempts this year to address safety issues, and many more will follow next year. For example, a seating structure that was high enough to conceal activity behind it has been lowered. (This complies with “2-6” landscaping guidelines; structures should not exceed 2 feet high, and landscaping should have a 6 foot perimeter.) Next year, a disk goal (Frisbee golf goal) will be installed, and there will be Food Truck gatherings. The City is consulting with other areas that deal with urban park issues, and they are employing a methodology that seems to be effective. Basically, besides enforcement of laws and efforts to improve security, offer lots of events in the park. The combination of these two approaches usually causes a “reverse takeover” of the park.

The City is still taking applications of interest for building tenants through November 30. The building has an 830 sq. ft. main room, plus a private office and restroom.

Next year, the Parks Department will have a dedicated programming person to plan lots of events in the park.

There were many good ideas offered by MNAC representatives for different ways to use the park effectively.

Samish Way

Because of increasing crime statistics and positive methamphetamine contamination testing in 18 rooms at the Aloha Hotel on North Samish Way, the City will present a proposal to begin condemnation procedures for blight to the City Council on October 27.

If this process moves forward and is successful, the City will acquire the property from the owner at a price determined by the process. There is some chance that the City will acquire the property from the owner without going through the condemnation process, if the owner agrees to negotiations. If the city does acquire the property, plans are to demolish the building. It costs more than \$10,000 to decontaminate a methamphetamine-contaminated room, and 18 have tested positive in the building so far. It is assumed that more rooms are contaminated.

Mayor Linville reassured MNAC Representatives that the City is serious about reducing crime in this area, and we are moving carefully to make sure that should this action end up in a court of law, the City will be successful.

City of Bellingham Budget

Mayor Linville gave us some information about the recently-completed budget plan. She mentioned that she has been able to almost balance the budget in only 2 years. They had to dip into reserves for about \$650k, but other than that, the budget was balanced.

The Mayor is determined that the budget support ongoing operations that not only continues providing the services we depend on, but also activities that the public sees. They are working hard to implement prioritized recommendations from the various community workshops held over the past months.

Some notable items:

- They will be adding 2 police officer positions dedicated to the Downtown area. They will also be reassigning beats for existing officers to even out workloads.
- The City Center strategy guarantees that resources will be provided for all of downtown, not just the Waterfront.
- Next year, some city employees will be working in the Federal building. There is an effort underway to consolidate more city employees in the downtown area, and to utilize buildings already owned by the city rather than seeking new ones.
- There were funds allocated for a “Perk-Up for the Parkade” effort. While the underground facility is well-lighted, the entrance lighting and signage needs some sprucing up to make it more attractive as a parking option.
- They will continue funding community social service agencies at the same level. The Mayor recognizes that these agencies are involved in critical strategic partnerships with the city and provide services that help make the city successful.
- They are going to implement a program to try and lower the cost of 911 intervention services by having paramedics help individuals on-site, rather than always transmitting them to the hospital (where they are frequently treated and released).
- The Comprehensive Plan will be updated by 2016.
- They will be implementing a lean process to help facilitate desirable development projects when they arise.
- They will be implementing the Bike Plan.
- A feasibility study will be implemented for Library services.
- There will be several IT system updates for systems that are 20+ years old.

She reminded us that public is welcome at the budget meetings held every Monday in the Mayor’s board room.

Neighborhood Roundtable

- The Downtown Neighborhood has two Facebook pages. If you “like” one of them, you will receive lots of information about all the activities going on downtown.
- There will be two opportunities for the public to review the Airport Master Plan in October. The first is October 21 at 1 pm. The second is an open house on 10/23 at 5:30. Check the Port of Bellingham website for details.
- Quiet Zones: The City has completed required work and set aside money for gates at two crossings. We are now in a holding pattern, waiting for Burlington Northern to install the gates at both the Boulevard Park and C-Street intersections. Once that is accomplished, the railroad crossings at those two intersections will meet federal safety standards that will allow the trains not to blow their whistles at those crossings. The Mayor hopes to improve other crossings so we can eventually end up with a quiet zone through Bellingham. When asked how these two locations were prioritized, she replied that Burlington Northern requested the Boulevard Park crossing improvements, and that the C-Street intersection had to be closed because of safety issues.