

Fairhaven Neighbors Board Meeting Notes, March 7th, 2007

Fairhaven Park Pavilion, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Attendees of note: Kathryn Hanowell from the mayor's office; local businessman and candidate for city council Ham Hayes; County Council member and candidate for mayor of Bellingham Dan McShane; and Phyllis McKee and Brad Imus from the Fairhaven Village Association.

1. Consent Agenda

The Treasurer's Report and the Minutes from the last meeting were approved by email vote prior to the meeting.

2. Project Labyrinth

Karen McMans from Project Labyrinth presented a proposal to build a permanent 60-foot diameter labyrinth for meditation on the eastern side of Fairhaven Park. They have received approval from the Parks Dept. A temporary labyrinth at Fairhaven green is planned for a fundraiser and informational event on March 20th. See <http://www.projectlabyrinth.net/>

3. MNAC Report

The City Council has adopted 11 goals for the year 2007, including Goal 5: "Develop and implement plans that preserve and shape Bellingham as a city of neighborhoods that function interdependently as a vibrant, livable community with a distinct sense of place." See <http://www.cob.org/documents/council/2007-council-goals.pdf>),

Thom also reported that several neighborhoods have undertaken surveys or questionnaires, as FN is doing.

Thom also reported on a city effort to better understand what the public is thinking about community affairs, through the Public Involvement Needs Assessment. The final report from that effort (<http://www.cob.org/documents/mayor/pi-needs-assessment.pdf>) indicates that the city has a clear problem with receiving public input and that there are several steps that the city should take to rectify the problem.

4. ABN Report

Since a change in leadership and the recent re-vitalization of the mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Committee (MNAC), the Association of Bellingham Neighborhoods (ABN) has been experiencing a loss of focus and direction. There is difficulty in getting representatives from at least half of the neighborhoods to attend, and some are questioning the purpose of the ABN now that the city is taking MNAC more seriously. Former ABN president Ralph Thacker expressed the hope that ABN would complete the important work that it has begun on neighborhood plan revisions. A motion was made and passed to communicate to the ABN that it needs to clarify its mission.

5. CSN Report

Due to time constraints, Vince declined to offer a report from the Coalition of Southside Neighborhoods.

6. Fairhaven Merchants Association.

The Fairhaven Merchants Association is actually an offshoot of the (Old) Fairhaven Association. This group is composed primarily of business owners although it is open to other interested parties. There is also a Fairhaven Marketing Association, another subgroup of the (Old) Fairhaven Association.

In addition there is the Fairhaven Village Association, a closed association of commercial property owners in Fairhaven, whose membership overlaps somewhat with the Merchants Association. The Village Association was originally set up to deal with the Parking District, and meets irregularly only as needed.

It came as a surprise to the Merchants Association recently when its officers learned that the city officially recognizes the Fairhaven Neighbors association as the official representative for Fairhaven on neighborhood-wide issues, as it does all the 26 other neighborhood associations in Bellingham. Vince plans to attend the merchant Association's annual meeting later this week.

Kathryn Hanowell emphasized that the city recognizes all organized "stakeholder groups" as having a legitimate voice, not just the 26 recognized neighborhood associations.

7. Neighborhood Traffic Safety Program

The NTSP is a program by the city to enlist the suggestions of citizens on streets and intersections that might need traffic calming measures. The program applies only to non-arterial streets (e.g., not to Harris or Old Fairhaven Parkway), and may include marked crosswalks, stop signs, "slow – children at play" signs, etc. If you think that there are any places around Fairhaven that might need attention, contact our neighborhood liaison, Glenn Denckler.

8. Nominations to the FN Board

Migo is stepping down from the board and from the vice presidency, and Glenn has headed up the nomination process and has come up with two candidates so far: Shelly Pravda and Paul James. New executive officers will be elected at the April general meeting.

9. Revision of the By-Laws

The city has suggested minor changes to the FN corporation by-laws to bring them more into line with those of other neighborhood organizations. The full text of the proposed amendments will be circulated at least one week prior to the April meeting.

10. Annual Plant Sale Fundraiser

John Blethen has already proceeded quite a long way in once again organizing the Annual Plant Sale, to be held on March 31st on the open lot just to the north of the Village Green (thank you, Brad Imus). Fairhaven Neighbors plans to have a table for plant sales as well as information at the sale. Paul Schissler has helped with posters. Michael offered to loan a temporary gazebo in case of inclement weather.

12. Fairhaven Library Renovation.

The Bellingham Library is in the act of finalizing its long-range plans both for a new downtown library and for a million-dollar renovation of the Fairhaven branch library. At

7:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 5, 2007, a consulting architect will give a presentation at the Fairhaven Library about the nature and extend of the work being proposed. Michael asks that people please come out and show their interest and support for the Fairhaven Library.

13. Purchase of Property at Corner of Mill Street

The land development arm of Haggen stores has recently bought he empty lot just south of the Fairhaven Library. Haggen is actually interested in acquiring all the property behind its current store, where the Lucia Douglas Gallery is located. Haggen would like to try to talk Lucia Douglas to move next to the library, but the gallery has so far declined.

14. Haskell Property Rezone

Fred Haskell's representatives, surveyor Ron Jepson and architect David King, are planning to present the request for rezone at next Monday's City Council meeting. Both the city staff and the Planning Commission have recommended against the request at this time, until the Neighborhood Plan is updated.

In the public meeting that Fred held at the Fairhaven Library, he seemed willing to deal on the issue of a natural green buffer for Padden Creek. He seemed far less flexible on the issue of building heights, and in fact wants an increase in the height limits.

A motion was made, and passed, to send a letter to Fred Haskell and the City stating that we are working on updating the Neighborhood Plan now, and that we do not want to consider major zoning changes until that work is completed. The letter should also state that we intend to move the update along as quickly as we are able, and that we welcome any assistance that he might offer in this effort.

15. Neighborhood Plan Update

The Neighborhood Plan Update Committee has been hard at work and has generated a 35-page draft of the new Neighborhood Plan, based on city guidelines and materials developed by the ABN. Many areas are still blank, no more than place keepers. Glenn has been working to include more business owners as well as residents.

16. Fairhaven Design Review Revision

Copies of the latest draft of the proposed revision to the Design Review law (municipal code 20.26) were distributed, along with some very handsome maps depicting the current and proposed height limits in Fairhaven. As the maps show, the current proposal suggests changes to only three areas, all of which have no specified height limits under the existing rules.

[Note added after the meeting adjourned: the latest draft of the proposed revisions is now available on the Fairhaven Neighbors website.]

City planner Jackie Lynch has requested that FN move up the schedule of the public meeting from June to April. Fairhaven Merchant member Phyllis McKee felt like this was moving things along too quickly, but the city's reasoning is that it would be better to widen public input sooner in the process rather than later.