



SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

CITY OF FERNDALE MISSION STATEMENT

“To encourage and promote active cooperation with all citizens and stakeholders of Ferndale, we will work to provide for growth while planning and supporting progressive economic and community development for the well-being of our community.”





HISTORY OF THE CITY

The site of Ferndale was originally known to the Lummi Indians as “*Te-tas-um*”. Early European settlers call the area near the Nooksack River the “*lower crossing*” to distinguish it from the principal river crossing at Everson.

Billy Clark, a Texan who came to the Northwest during the Gold Rush, was the first European full-time resident of what eventually became the City of Ferndale. He lived here with his wife and family for over a decade.

When Billy sought to prove his title to the property, he was stunned to learn that he could not. Some years earlier he had relinquished his American citizenship in order to be employed at the Hudson Bay Company at Langley, Canada. Therefore, because he was now an English citizen, Billy Clark was not eligible to claim title to the property. He sought help from an old friend, Darius Rogers, at the Bellingham Coal Mine. Rogers promptly filed claim to the 174 acres himself, which made him the first legal owner of the property. Billy eventually left and built a new homestead at East Sound on Orcas Island.

When Darius Rogers secured his claim in 1882, there were only a few other white neighbors; Thomas Barrett, who lived by the lake that bears his name, Thomas Wynne and John Tennant, both with Indian wives, and perhaps a dozen other settlers nearby.

John Tennant helped organize the first school, the first Sunday school, and the first church. Thomas Wynne established the first blacksmith shop and brought in the first wagon.

Most of the “settlers of the 1870’s” confined their operations to locations near the river. There were no roads; meandering muddy trails wound through the woods, and the people used the river as their highway.

The strength of resources for fishing and lumbering brought early settlers, many from Scandinavia. A multitude of small mills were built along the Nooksack River and gradually the forests receded to reveal the fertile soil beneath. Agriculture soon became an important industry and has remained key to the area.

In 1884 the Northwest Diagonal Road was opened up to Ferndale, and connected up with a road that ran through Custer to Blaine. In 1886 the Guide Meridian Road was opened, but Whatcom County remained rustic and isolated until 1893 when the Great Northern Railroad built its railway line across the western part of the County, through Ferndale, to Blaine, and on to Vancouver, British Columbia.



Curiously, it is often far away forces that shape the fate of an area. The Treaty of 1846, fixing the boundary between America and English soil, brought a large survey crew to the 49th parallel, clearing a 40-foot gap along the line. The San Francisco fire skyrocketed the price of lumber, which resulted in the building of the first large sawmill in Bellingham.

The Fraser River Gold Rush of 1858 brought thousands of prospectors through the area, on what they hoped would be the road to wealth. The race to build a telegraph line to Europe via Seattle, Alaska, the Bering Sea, and Asia dragged a trail across the County and left fragments of the Telegraph Road that remain today.

A generation ago, it was almost impossible to foresee that Ferndale would house the location of large oil refineries that processed oil from Alaska and other continents. No less remarkable is the fact that the shipment of alumina from Australia brought Intalco Aluminum to Ferndale.

Incorporated in 1907, Ferndale began its existence as a “town” under Washington law. In 1980 the City became a Non-Charter Code City with the Council-Manager form of government. In 1998 the citizens of Ferndale voted to return to the Mayor-Council form of government, with a special election held on March of 1999 to choose a new Mayor and seven Councilmembers. The third largest community in Whatcom County, Ferndale’s 2016 population was 13,205.





ELECTED OFFICIALS

FERNDALE MAYOR

Jon Mutchler

Term ends 12/31/2019

FERNDALE CITY COUNCILMEMBERS

Position #1 – Rebecca Xczar

Term ends 12/31/2019

Position #2 – Greg Hansen

Term ends 12/31/2019

Position #3 – Keith Olson

Mayor Pro Tem 2016-2019

Term ends 12/31/2019

Position #4 – Teresa Taylor

Term ends 12/31/2019

Position #5 – Cathy Watson

Term ends 12/31/2017

Position #6 – Carol Bersch

Term ends 12/31/2017

Position #7 – Brent Goodrich

Term ends 12/31/2017



APPOINTED OFFICIALS

City Administrator
Gregory Young

City Clerk
Susan Duncan

Finance Director
Sirke Salminen

Community Development Director
Jori Burnett

Chief of Police
Kevin Turner

Public Works Director
Kevin Renz

Communications Officer
Riley Sweeney

Other Officials
Dannon Traxler – City Attorney

Terry Lewis – Municipal Court Judge

Roy, Simmons, & Parsons, P.S. – Public Defender

David Nelson – City Prosecutor



MAYOR & CITY COUNCIL ORGANIZATION

The City Council is the legislative and policy-making branch of City government. The Council must approve City laws (through ordinances) and policies (through resolutions); they approve expenditures through the annual budget process and set the general tone for the government itself. The Mayor is part of the executive branch. The Mayor is responsible for carrying out the policies set by the City Council. The Mayor and seven-member City Council meets at least twice monthly to conduct business. The City operates under the Mayor-Council form of government and utilizes a City Administrator appointed by the Mayor.

The Mayor is elected to a four-year term. The City Administrator runs the day-to-day business of the City. Councilmembers are elected at-large for four-year overlapping terms. Any resident of the City for longer than one year, if a qualified voter, is eligible to run for election to the Council. Elections are held on odd-numbered years.

COUNCIL COMMITTEES

In addition to serving as members of the City Council, Councilmembers also participate in various committees which have been created to assist them in examining in greater depth and detail issues that may come before the Council. Every two years the Council organizes itself with respect to the number and makeup of the Committees.

The Committees meet normally twice a month or as needed in order to review issues that come to them via referral from the full Council, a member thereof, citizens, or staff. Often times, issues are resolved in Committee without further action on the part of the Council. Frequently the Committees make recommendations which are then later considered by the full City Council. The following standing Committees currently exist:

Public Works & Utilities Committee

Councilmembers Watson, Goodrich & Taylor

This Committee directs its attention primarily to matters of City infrastructure. The Committee may hear issues concerning City development standards, the scheduling of improvements within the water, sewer, storm drainage, or street systems, or the consideration of rates, fees and policies for the utility operations of the City.

Planning & Land Use Committee

Councilmembers Olson, Xczar & Taylor

This Committee is focused on the planning and land use activities with the City. Frequently, new legislation originates in the Planning & Land Use Committee.

Finance & Administration Committee

Councilmembers Bersch, Hansen & Xczar

This Committee concerns itself with City finance and budget matters, as well as, the administration duties of the City. Additionally, the Finance & Administration Committee has historically been involved in labor relations, and in giving direction to the staff on personnel issues.



Lodging Tax Advisory Committee

Councilmember Hansen

The Lodging Tax Advisory Committee consists of five members appointed by the City Council. One member is a current Councilmember, two members are representatives of businesses required to pay the tax, two members are persons in activities authorized to be funded by revenue received from the tax, and one member is from City staff. The City staff member coordinates the meetings. The Council reviews the membership on an annual basis to make changes as appropriate.

COUNCIL INTERGOVERNMENTAL ASSIGNMENTS

Members of the City Council and City staff serve on a number of Boards or Committees which are intergovernmental, support, or advisory in nature and designed to coordinate activities of the City with the other political subdivisions and groups within the County or within the State. The following is a listing of current council assignments:

Bellingham International Airport Advisory Committee

Councilmember (Open)

The Airport Advisory Committee consists of representatives of the various groups served and affected by the Airport. The Committee makes recommendations to the Airport Manager and the Port of Bellingham, which operates the Airport.

Ferndale School Board Liaison

Councilmember Taylor

The Council liaison to the Ferndale School Board attends Board meetings and meets with School District Administration to provide a communications link between the Council and the School District.

Whatcom Transit Authority Governing Board

Councilmember Watson

The Whatcom Transportation Authority provides specialized and public transportation services throughout most of Whatcom County. The Governing Board oversees the activities and operations of the agency.

Whatcom County Fire District #7 Council Liaison

Councilmember Goodrich

The Council liaison to fire District #7 attends Fire Commissioners' meetings to provide a communications link between the City and the Fire District.

Chamber of Commerce Council Liaison

Councilmember Hansen

The Council liaison to Ferndale Chamber of Commerce attends Chamber meetings to provide an effective communications link between the Council and the business community.



PRTAB Liaison

Councilmember Xczar

The Council liaison to the Parks, Recreation, and Trails Advisory Board (PRTAB) attends meetings to provide an effective communications link between the Council and this group.

Heritage Society Council Liaison

Councilmember Bersch

The Council liaison to Ferndale Heritage Society attends Society meetings to provide an effective communications link between the Council and this civic group.

Old Settlers Council Liaison

Mayor Mutchler

The Council liaison to Old Settlers attends meetings to provide an effective communications link between the Council and this civic group.

Art Commission Council Liaison

Councilmember Watson

The Council liaison to the Art Commission attends meetings to provide an effective communications link between the Council and this group.

Community Center Advisory

Councilmember Hansen

The Council liaison to the Pioneer Pavilion Community Center Building attends meetings to provide an effective communications link between the Council and this group.

Ferndale Downtown Assoc.

Councilmember Watson

The Council liaison to the Ferndale Downtown Association attends meetings to provide an effective communications link between the Council and this group.

Community Service Cooperative

Councilmember Taylor

The Council liaison to the Community Service Cooperative attends meetings to provide an effective communications link between the Council and this group.

Ferndale Public Market

Councilmember Bersch

The Council liaison to the Ferndale Public Market attends meetings to provide an effective communications link between the Council and this group.

Planning Commission

Councilmember Xczar

The Council liaison to the Ferndale Planning Commission attends meetings to provide an effective communications link between the Council and this group.