



Living by the Nooksack

A Quarterly Newsletter from the City of Ferndale

Winter 2023

What is This?

While many of our residents follow us on social media and check our website, we know that plenty of you don't have time for that.

This quarterly newsletter is our latest effort to help you understand what is going on in your city.

Inside this article, you will find:

- Insight from Mayor Greg Hansen about the 2023 Ferndale budget
- How to permit an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) in four easy steps
- Tips for protecting your property from floods
- Details on Animal Services in Ferndale
- . . . and more!

If you have thoughts about this newsletter, please call Communications Officer Riley Sweeney at (360) 685-2353 or email him at Rileysweeney@Cityofferndale.org

Accessible online at www.cityofferndale.org/newsletter



Girders Arrive at Thornton Overpass Construction Site

In November, residents may have seen the arrival of several girders at the Thornton Overpass construction site. These concrete structures provide the primary support for the bridge and are a critical component for the final construction. Each girder weighs a little less than 130,000 lbs—that's almost as heavy as the space shuttle! More updates and a live webcam available at www.cityofferndale.org/thornton.



Annual Utility Rate Increase Set for 2023

Per city ordinance, utility rates are set to increase in 2023 to keep up with the cost of operations. This increase is set to be 5% and will be reflected in the Feb 28th bill.

The Feb. bill will also include the new average for your sewer charges based on the 2022 three winter bills. This will prevent an unexpectedly large bill during the summer. For more info about your bill, call our utility clerk at 360-384-4269.



Animal Services in Ferndale

Dogs barking nonstop in the night? Concerned about a potentially neglected pet in your neighborhood? Found a deceased animal in the road? Instead of calling the City, please reach out to Whatcom County Humane Society.

The City of Ferndale contracts all of our animal control services through them. This includes picking up stray or deceased animals, investigating complaints, whether neglect or noise related, and the enforcement of licensing requirements for your pets.

Animal Control is available 24/7 and can be reached at (360) 733-2080 ext. 3017. If it is after hours and an animal emergency, please call 911.

City Selects Schell Creek for Water Quality Improvements

The City has selected Schell Creek basin for the development of a Stormwater Management Action Plan (SMAP). This plan will identify stormwater projects and management actions to protect and improve water quality in Schell Creek, which flows through Ferndale to Lummi Bay and the Salish Sea.

Improving water quality will protect the people, pets, fish, shellfish, and other things that rely on clean water in Schell Creek. The SMAP is a requirement of the Department of Ecology Phase II Municipal Stormwater Permit, and will be completed in early 2023.

For more information, or to report spills or pollution, contact the City of Ferndale Stormwater Department stormwater@cityofferndale.org or call 360-685-2357.



Protecting Your Property from a Flood

After last year, residents are painfully aware of the impact a flood can have on their property. Here are some steps you can take to protect your property and limit your losses before flood season. Plan ahead. Many of these actions take time to plan and implement.

- Buy flood insurance.
- Elevate your house or commercial building above the 100- year flood elevation
- Wet floodproof non-residential structures such as barns, garages, etc.
- Prepare in advance to use sandbags, plywood and plastic to protect your property during a flood.
- When possible, move property and livestock to higher ground before a flood.

For more information on keeping your household safe during a flood, check out www.cityofferndale.org/Flood

Ferndale's 2023 Budget Builds a Bridge to the Future

Recently, I stood at the Thornton Overpass construction site, watching in awe as massive cranes carefully lifted girders the size of a city block and placed them on pillars above the railroad tracks. These girders will form the bones of the Overpass, supporting cars, trucks, bikes, and pedestrians for generations to come as they travel to and from our city. As the 130,000-pound components were locked into place, I was struck by the size and scope of the moment we find ourselves in.

Here, on the cusp of 2023, Ferndale is making big changes. We are putting in place the structures, roads and organizations we need to grow as a community. The 2023 municipal budget reflects and supports those changes and capitalizes on new opportunities to come.

In 2023, the cityscape in which we live will change. We will see the demolition of our beloved Old Main building and the full opening of our new Ferndale High School. We expect to see the Catalyst Project break ground on Main Street. We will see the opening of a brand-new skate park for Ferndale that pays tribute to our industrial history while providing recreation for the future generations. We will see brand new housing developments that reflect the diversity of our community – single family neighborhoods, multi-family near our downtown and low-income housing for those who need it.

In our downtown, we have seen several new businesses open including restaurants, grocery, and retail. Beyond our city core, new manufacturers are bringing fresh jobs, new ideas, and more commerce to our community.

As our city grows and changes, our local government rises to meet the needs of our community. The 2023 budget includes a new police officer – a necessary addition to our dedicated police department that will help keep us safe. It also includes a new planner to keep the permit desk moving swiftly, expanded hours for our park workers, and a new public works crew member to plow our streets and repair our infrastructure.

Like those large girders, we are laying the groundwork for the future. We are designing a new civic campus that will include a new court, council chambers and city hall. We are designing a new stage at Pioneer Park to host more and better events at the heart of our community. And for the first time, we have hired both a federal and state advocate, to help bring our tax dollars back home from Olympia and Washington, DC for the projects we need done in our city.

During the pandemic, we activated Ferndale Community Services and the Ferndale Downtown Association, expanding their reach and abilities. Already, Ferndale Community Services is operating a severe weather shelter throughout the cold season and the Downtown Association has distributed thousands of dollars in grants to our local businesses.

We have done all of this and more through prudent financial management, a willingness to try new things, and good old-fashioned legwork. The actions that we are poised to take in 2023 and beyond are built on solid plans and careful consideration. Ferndale is a community of doers and innovators, much more than dreamers. This means that we must be realistic: we are in an unusual economy, with extremely low unemployment, extreme demand, and limited supply of housing with significant inflation. This budget anticipates that our costs will increase more rapidly than our revenues, and while the budget allows the City to move forward with its plans, we must look carefully at the economics of 2024 and beyond.

Ferndale is becoming known as a collaborative City, and through this teamwork we have been able to do things that larger cities could only dream of. Rather than pounding the table or making partisan speeches, here in Ferndale, we are focused on doing the work and finding the solutions. As President Truman once said, "It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit."

This budget, like the girders at Thornton, is a key component in that bridge to the future. A future full of change, promise and opportunities for our city.

Thank you - Mayor Greg Hansen



So, you want to build an ADU— What is it and what is the process?

An accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is a small, self-contained residential unit located on the same lot as an existing single-family home and subordinate to a single-family dwelling unit. An ADU has all the basic facilities needed for day-to-day living independent of the main home, such as a kitchen, sleeping area, and a bathroom.

ADUs can expand the range of housing choices for residents in the city, as well as helping residents age in place, adding space to house extended family, offering an avenue for rental income, and more. Developing an ADU can seem daunting, but you are not alone. We have outlined the process in four easy steps below.

Step 1: Check the map.

ADUs are permitted in all residential single-family zones (Ferndale Municipal Code 18:33— RS low, RS medium, and RS high). These zones are highlighted on the City GIS maps (www.cityofferndale.org/maps) in three shades of yellow on the “Official Zoning” layer.



Step 2: Check the code.

Ferndale Municipal Code 18.34 outlines a number of criteria for the construction of an ADU. Each must be met before an ADU application is approved. Most importantly:

- Only one ADU is allowed per lot as an accessory use to a single-family home.
- The ADU maximum size shall be no more than 50 percent of the square footage of the existing residence or 800 square feet, whichever is less.
- The ADU may not be segregated in ownership from the principal dwelling unit.

Step 3: Apply for a permit.

Before any construction can commence, the property owner must obtain a building permit and indicate on the application form that the use is an ADU. All the City’s permits are applied for online through the permit portal, which is available on the city website.

How much does it cost? The final permit cost will depend on the size of the ADU and the total project valuation. Typically, an ADU permit is \$5,000-\$8,000 including relevant impact fees.

Step 4: Build it and Enjoy!

For more information about the ADU process, and online application forms, please visit the city website at www.cityofferndale.org or contact the Community Development Department at 360-685-2379.

Ferndale Family Partnership Tours Police Station

Recently, a group of homeschool students had the opportunity to tour the Ferndale Police Station as part of the Ferndale Family Partnership, a program that helps connect homeschool students with resources from the School District and their greater community.

While at the station, the students gained insight into the work of their local police department as well as exploring some of the equipment and vehicles used to keep our community safe.

The Ferndale Police Department always appreciates visitors and loves to see kids (and officers) with a smile on their face.

