



Living by the Nooksack

A Quarterly Newsletter from the City of Ferndale

Fall 2019

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.

This is a pilot program for 2019. If you love it, let us know, if you hate it, let us know.

Inside this issue, you will find:

- Details on a recent levee repair
- Tips for staying dry this flood season
- The secret reason why Ferndale was built on both sides of the river
- Details on how you can volunteer on a city board or commissions
- . . . 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



New Unitycare Facility Opens in Ferndale

After a year of construction, UnityCare Northwest has opened their new North Whatcom Health Center on Portal Way this summer. The 23,000 square-foot facility provides medical, dental, behavioral health and pharmacy services, employing over sixty full-time staff members.

This \$15 million dollar facility will be the most comprehensive health services facility in Whatcom County outside of Bellingham and provide essential services to Ferndale and north county. This new facility was made possible thanks to generous contributions from Ferndale businesses and state funding securing by our elected officials in Olympia.

City Rejects Proposal to Convert FHS Old Main Into a New City Hall

With the passage of the Ferndale School Bond, the City explored the idea of converting the Ferndale High School Old Main building into a new city hall, council chambers and courthouse. The current city hall, which has been in continual use since the late 90s, is at capacity and our current council/courthouse facilities are not adequate for use. Previously, the City had converted the old library to a police station and the old firehouse to a council chambers, so in that spirit of renewal, the city conducted a study to see what the cost would be.

The study determined that it would cost \$11-13 million to convert the space into a complete city facility, which is comparable to building a new building from scratch. The public voiced concerns about traffic, parking and the challenges of co-locating the new high school with a courthouse. In light of this information, the council voted 7-0 to reject the proposal.





Repairing and Strengthening the Levee

During a recent inspection of the Nooksack River levee that protects our town, Public Works staff identified locations that had been eroded by the river.

In partnership with the federal and state permitting agencies and with traffic control support from Ferndale Public Works, the United States Army Corps of Engineers repaired and strengthened the eroded section of the levee structure.

The work, conducted in late June and early July, added almost 1,000 cubic yards of rock, stone and topsoil to the levee, restoring the barrier's ability to repel the

highest flood waters. This section of the levee protects the treatment facility that provides Ferndale's drinking water, as well as the historic Pioneer Park, our downtown core and the Whatcom County Public Utilities District.

"The levee performs the vital function of protecting our community and it is our responsibility to maintain the levee structure," said Public Works Supervisor Bo Westford.

What is up with these Green Land Use Signs?

Eagle-eyed residents may have spotted some of these green land use signs located around the city. They are put up when the City wants your input about a potential change in your neighborhood.

It may be an incoming development, a project large enough to require environmental review or a new business or housing type different than what is usually allowed in that space. Alternatively, it could be a potential update to the underlying zoning of the neighborhood suggested by city staff.

No matter the cause, the signs all mean the same thing - we want to hear from you! Check the notice on the sign to find out when the public hearing will be held, or you can also access all public notices at www.cityofferndale.org/publicnotices at any time. Questions may be directed to the city staff member listed under contact information on the notice.



Ferndale Arts Commission Installs New Downtown Murals



This summer, the Ferndale Arts Commission installed a series of murals in our downtown core. Two of the pieces are commissioned work by local artists, while two others were completed by volunteers. Funding for these murals was provided by the business owners themselves, a grant from the Whatcom Community Foundation and matching funds from the Arts Commission.

"Adding art is an essential part of making Ferndale's downtown the incredible, vibrant place we all want it to be," said Councilmember Rebecca Xczar, who organized the project. For a complete listing, go to www.cityofferndale.org/murals.

FLOOD SEASON

Time to Clear those Storm Drains

Are you ready for the rain? Help prevent pollution and flooding by thinking ahead!

- Make sure catch basins are clear of leaves and debris.
- Make sure storm ponds and facilities are inspected and maintained.
- Pick up pet waste and debris that can pollute stormwater runoff. Dispose of waste properly and store materials inside or under cover.
- Be flood ready. Visit the City's website for more information on flood preparedness at <https://www.cityofferndale.org/floods>.



Many stormwater ponds in Ferndale are privately owned and are required to be inspected and maintained by Homeowners Associations. Failure to maintain the stormwater facilities may result in violations, flooding, and property damage. For more information, contact the City of Ferndale Stormwater Department stormwater@cityofferndale.org or call 360-685-2357



Flood Safety Tips

As the flood waters rise this fall, remember to keep your family safe. Here's some tips to safely navigate our wettest season.

Turn Around, Don't Drown: It only takes twelve inches of flowing water to carry a small car, and even a little bit of water over the road can carry dangerous debris. Please abide by road-closed signs. Roads are closed for public safety. If there is water on the roadway, do not drive through the area.

Get the Latest Updates: When the rain starts falling, you can check the river level via the NOAA River Gauge, linked at www.cityofferndale.org/flood. For the latest updates on road closures, follow the City's social media channels.

Make a Plan, Build a Kit: Talk to your family members before the rains fall so you know what to do before, during and after a flood. Plan an evacuation spot and make sure you know how to get in touch with each other. Build a kit that includes food, water and other supplies to last at least 72 hours. Make sure your vital documents (and first aid kit) are in a water-proof container.

A City Divided by the River

Darius Rogers was one of Ferndale's first entrepreneurs. In 1880, when Ferndale was only a few wood buildings on the east bank of the Nooksack, Rogers hired one of the founders of the town, John Tennant, to build a general store and a school on the west bank of the river. Tennant complied and before long, the west bank of Ferndale had several new residents. Why did Rogers do this? He had just acquired the ferry service across the Nooksack. For more pioneer tales, check out the Ferndale Heritage Society.





City Seeks Volunteers for Boards and Commissions

One of the many ways residents of Ferndale can help their city is to serve on a Board or Commission. The City of Ferndale has nine different advisory boards, and they do the heavy lifting of vetting proposals, drafting materials and making recommendations to the City Council. Whether reviewing the latest rules for Accessory Dwelling Units with the Planning Commission, to planning the next summer recreational activities with the Parks Board, to vetting new mural ideas with the Arts Commission (see page 2), the Boards and Commissions provide an essential conduit for citizen input.

The city accepts applications to serve on these boards year-round and the public is always invited to participate. For more information and application materials, check out the boards and commissions page on the city of Ferndale website or email City Clerk Susan Duncan at susanduncan@cityofferndale.org.

Upcoming Events

FREE MOVIE NIGHT



Citywide Community

MEETING

TUESDAY, NOV. 19TH

6:30PM, Pioneer Pavilion



Get the Inside Scoop on Next Year

Meet Your Elected Officials