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SAMISH NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

www.samishneighborhood.org

SNA FALL 2012 NEIGHBORHOOD PICNIC
NOON TO 3 P.M. SEPT. 9 AT LAKE PADDEN PARK PAVILLION

Come one, come all! The Samish Neighborhood Association is hosting its annual picnic & potluck on Sunday, September 9th, from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Lake Padden Pavilion. Local Candidates and officials will be attending to get to know the neighborhood. SNA will provide hamburgers, hot dogs, and BBQ chicken to all members. Membership may be purchased at the picnic. (\$15 per household; \$12 for seniors) Guests of members are \$5 each. Attendees are encouraged to bring a side dish, salad, or dessert. If your last name begins with a letter A-P, please bring a salad or side dish. Those whose last names begin with letters Q-Z, please bring a dessert.

The Bellingham Pedestrian Master Plan and Our Neighborhood

By Steve Abell, SNA Board Member

Early last year the city began an ambitious project to develop a master plan for improving the walkability of our city. Residents, city staff, and a consultant were engaged in this effort. The full Pedestrian Master Plan is available at cob.org/walk. The Pedestrian Master Plan vision, as stated in the document, is:

“The residents of Bellingham envision a community that invites people of all ages and abilities to walk for enjoyment, exercise, and daily transportation by providing a safe, convenient, and attractive pedestrian environment.”

The development team took considerable input from residents on how walkability of the city could be improved. They developed a recommended pedestrian network located throughout Bellingham neighborhoods with over 300 possible projects and then distilled all this down into two tiers of priority projects. Tier 1, with highest priority, is targeted to be completed within 10 years. Tier 2, with lower priority, may be completed later. The primary source of funds is the Transportation Benefit District. The team also identified other sources of funding that might be tapped to implement the selected projects. Commitment of funds will come later and, of course, will ultimately determine what actually gets done.

The Plan represents a huge effort by a lot of people, and at the very least provides a blueprint for future improvements. About 40 walkability issues identified in Samish Neighborhood appear in the Plan, including a general lack of sidewalks, especially on the Stairsteps. However, only two very small projects comprising improvements in pedestrian crossings at two locations along Samish Way were identified as Tier 2 projects. There were no Tier 1 projects identified for Samish Neighborhood.

Although implementation of the Master Plan will improve overall pedestrian travel for the city, there are almost no improvements targeted for Samish. While this may be disappointing, it is consistent with the criteria used by the team to prioritize projects. Keep in mind that sidewalks cost about \$600 per linear foot. The overriding criteria, given the hard fact that little money is likely to be available to implement any Pedestrian Plan projects at all, were related to prioritizing projects that capture the biggest benefit with the least expense for the most people who walk. This translates into small pedestrian projects being placed in areas of the city with high density and lots of current and future walkers. Unfortunately, this leaves out almost all of Samish Neighborhood. We simply don't have the density to justify sidewalk projects, and because most of us live on a hill, we don't really have a lot of walkers.

SNA Membership Benefits

Your dues maintain our ability to host our March annual meeting and the September picnic. These two events provide you with the opportunity to meet other interested neighbors, get an update on what is being proposed in the neighborhood and provide feedback to the SNA Board on these and other issues of concern to you.

Your dues also enable us to mail informative newsletters to you twice a year. We look forward to having you join us as a new or renewing member.

Please complete the membership form and add or update your email address mailing in the form with your dues. We do not share your email address; we use it for timely updates and SNA meeting information.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Yes, I want to join my friends and neighbors as a member of the Samish Neighborhood Association, a 501 (c)(4) non-profit association. I want to be a member that supports and promotes the high quality of life in our neighborhood and in our city. I am enclosing payment of dues for September 2012 to September 2013.

Please Print

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Check all that apply

\$15 household \$12 seniors Renewal New Member

Send check and form to SNA, P.O. Box 1551, Bellingham, WA 98227. To check on membership status, contact Tim Wynn at 714-1366, info@samishneighborhood.org.

From the President of the Samish Neighborhood Association:

City Council Denies Padden Trails Development Rezone request

Over a year after the owners of Padden Trails began the process of requesting an “up-zone” of their 113 acres, the Bellingham City Council has denied their request. The developers requested an increase from approximately 224 single family homes to 492 multi-family units (condos, row-houses, duplexes, and apartments).

Samish Neighborhood Association residents, members, Board of Directors, and many others opposed this development. As your elected representatives we are not against development in our neighborhood. We instead believe that development must in the best interest of the entire neighborhood both today and 20 years in to the future.

The increase of density proposed by Padden Trails brings to light not just the impact on our neighborhood but what other potential developments other city neighborhoods will face in the future. We all recognize that growth is going happen. Our view is that is should not sacrifice the safety, security, traffic, and character of the neighborhood and city we call home.

To that end, I want to encourage everyone in the Samish Neighborhood to join our association and come to the picnic. A number of the local representatives and candidates for office will be at the picnic and we would like to demonstrate the strength of the neighborhood and the association with a large showing. A good showing will be remembered by our current and (potentially) future representatives and they will respond accordingly when Samish Neighborhood Association weighs in on policies or decisions that impact our neighborhood and quality of life. Numbers do count so please make your ‘voice’ heard by joining the Samish Neighborhood Association and attending the picnic. - *Joe Carpenter*

Environmental Concerns of Padden Trails

By Garey Vodopich, SNA Board Member

I believe we need to look carefully at one of the items relating to the Padden trails development that has not been extensively discussed either in the media or by the city council. That item is the potential the pollution of Padden Creek by the development storm water direct discharge into the creek.

Developers will have told us that they are meeting the standards set forth by the city. That is correct, however, the city has set a very low standard for the development. This standard allows untreated storm water to dump directly into Padden Creek with only control of the quantity and rate of discharge but not quality. The primary control required by the city is a weir dam at the outlet of Lake Padden. The weir dam can be set to control the quantity of water in Padden Creek as well as the rate of flow into Padden Creek. There is no quality control associated with this structure. There are no retention ponds which control sediment and no filtration(natural or artificial) which control pollutants, no treatment of any type, except dilution by adjusting the flow out of Lake Padden.

But who is going to be measuring the ‘capacity’ level of the creek and when? If it’s raining, who goes to the lake/dam and closes the gates? If it’s dry, we must ask the same question. Will the city be able to pay for the correct operation of the Lake Padden weir or will it be neglected in the face of future budget difficulties?

Currently, the City of Bellingham has a major project to ‘daylight’ a portion of the lower Padden Creek that currently runs through a large tunnel in order to improve flood control and enhance habitat for the returning Salmon. But why are we spending potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars to ‘Daylight’ (remove the tunnel) Padden Creek for flood control and salmon enhancement below the development, while we allow un-treated storm water to flow into the creek? It is understood that untreated storm water now runs into Padden Creek from other areas, but here,at Padden Trails, we have a chance to stop the process of new pollutants from the development. Why not take this opportunity to demonstrate the right way to add single family housing to Bellingham?

Bottom line is, there is not a good reason for the storm water to be allowed into Padden Creek without some type of treatment. The city has the opportunity to demand this be done as part of the project, so lets do it !!

Samish Neighborhood News

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Editor: Greg McCracken. Meetings held at 7 p.m., second Tuesday of the month in the basement of the Community Baptist Church, 810 Samish Way, except for March (general meeting) and September (picnic).
To receive this newsletter by email, send a request to info@samishneighborhood.org

Traffic, Safety and Padden Trails

By Steve Abell, SNA Board Member

On July 2 the City Council rejected the Padden Trails Comprehensive Plan and Rezone proposal. This ended, at least for the moment, a long deliberation process, and overrode the Planning Commission’s recommendation to approve the amendment and rezone. Traffic and safety issues played a prominent role in the Council’s decision. The Planning Commission’s recommendation included its vague judgment that traffic and safety issues could be conditioned or mitigated away. The Council disagreed.

Much of the Council’s discussions centered on (1) how many housing units were appropriate; and (2) the single access road. In 2006, 224 single-family units were approved, although the project was abandoned after the real estate market crashed. The Padden Trails proposal asked for an increase in unit count to 492, including a large multifamily component. The Council rejected this count almost immediately, but then struggled to find a middle ground that would result in tolerable traffic congestion and acceptable safety for the single access site. They failed, recognizing that traffic problems increased with any increase in density, mitigation of traffic would be highly problematic, and the single access road had the potential to create a disaster if the road became blocked to emergency fire and rescue services. Based on the location of the site (nearly entirely enclosed by I-5 and Lake Padden Park), construction of a secondary access road to improve safety was judged not feasible.

The Traffic Impact Analysis provided by the developer showed over 4,300 new car trips per day after full build-out of 492 units. All vehicles leaving the future site would have to pass through the intersection of Connelly Avenue and 34th Street. A possible second entrance along 33rd Street was considered, but even if this had been approved, these two entrances would still converge into a single access road before reaching the site. Councilman Snapp, with his extensive experience in emergency services, was particularly emphatic about the hazards of single access and stated his intention to vote against any density increase. Several other Council members recognized that traffic, even with mitigation, would be a problem at the Connelly/34th intersection and at the I-5 interchange in spite of a new traffic light at the northbound ramps.

While the Padden proposal met some goals of the Comp Plan, it conflicted with others, including goals related to avoiding autocentric developments, traffic hazards, and public safety. A thoughtful memo from Councilman Lilliquist to the rest of the Council spelled out the goals met and not met. Unlike the Planning Commission, the City Council weighed these pros and cons, and in the end, was unable to find an acceptable compromise and therefore decided to reject the entire proposal. Council members were not in universal agreement, but traffic and safety problems turned out to be two of the issues on which their decision turned.

From the Treasurer of the Samish Neighborhood Association:

CAN WE REALLY AFFORD TO SEND OUT A NEWSLETTER TO EVERYBODY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

The short answer is: not for very much longer.

SNA sends a printed newsletter twice a year to every household in the neighborhood. As costs have risen, this has become a greater burden on the yearly budget. SNA has been reluctant to raise dues as this becomes a barrier, albeit a minor one, to neighborhood residents joining the association. The Board of Directors believes that the more members and higher participation that we have in the association, that greater impact we can have on policies and decisions which affect the quality of life in the Samish Neighborhood area.

Let me break it down in specific terms. In May 2012, we had 104 paid members. This generated dues revenue of approximately \$1,350. The city helps the neighborhood associations with an annual \$500 grant to help defer the cost of publications like newsletters. (There is no guarantee this will continue.) This amounts to around \$1,850 per year to cover all expenses. The May 2012 newsletter cost \$867 to print and mail to each household. (That was after we found the very cheapest method for printing and mailing.) If we only had the expense of the newsletter, then we could probably still sustain the cost of two mailings a year. However, we have a number of other expenses that we must cover. They include post box fees, web site registration fees, fall picnic costs, room rental for monthly board of directors meetings, state 501(c)(4) registration fees, and administrative expenses.

Altogether, it means that we can no longer afford to send out two mailings a year. The Board believes the newsletter is an important part of the SNA mission but is looking at different ways to reach out to the neighborhood. We need your input to make this important decision. We have identified some possible actions that we can take, including raising membership dues, having only one annual newsletter or a combination of newsletters and post-card notifications, or sending newsletters only to SNA members.

If you think one of these ideas is the way SNA should communicate in the future, or if you have another solution, please let us know at the SNA picnic or email tim.wynn@comcast.net. - *Tim Wynn*