



Happy Spring North Bend Residents,

The weather may not always show it, but spring is here. That means we have officially passed the one-year anniversary of the Coronavirus Pandemic stopping the world in its tracks. What a difference a year makes. Last spring was dominated by fear and uncertainty. This spring brings the hope for a return to normalcy with three Covid-19 vaccines spurring positivity.

At our recent virtual quarterly staff luncheon we shared some positive effects we have experienced this past year, living and working in a different way. I encourage you all to do the same – you might be surprised by your answers.

Although it may still be a few months before we see each other mask-less, we are beginning the initial planning work to reopen City Hall to the public. We are cautious and meticulous in our planning so that we do not reopen before more staff members are fully vaccinated. But rest assured, we are planning. We miss welcoming residents into our still-new City Hall and holding meetings in Council Chambers - and look forward to eventually taking those closed signs off the front doors.

As we move into the 2nd quarter of 2021, we wanted to look back at the last quarter and highlight City accomplishments. For a full year now, City staff and elected officials have been working in a new environment. Despite the on-going pandemic, many milestones and achievements were marked.

Infrastructure

Earlier this month we received the news that our Water System Plan (WSP) received final approval from the State Dept. of Health. The WSP outlines our 5-year plan – consistent with Growth Management requirements and other state law – to deliver safe and reliable drinking water to our current and future customers, which includes both City residents and Unincorporated King County residents. The plan provides a detailed overview of our facilities, procedures, policy and future actions that will guide important future infrastructure projects that ensure we meet our legal obligations to provide water to our customers and residents.

To achieve our goal of water security, we continue evaluating multiple long-term mitigation water options to meet all future requirements of our Centennial Well Water Right, including renewed negotiations with the Sallal Water Association for a wholesale water / mitigation contract. We also continue evaluating alternative mitigation projects.

Phase 1 of the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) High Priority Improvements project is over 90% complete and Phase 2 design is 50% complete. Earlier this month, City Council approved new sewer rates and General Facilities Charges that will complete the funding through a 30-year low interest bond. While the rate increase was small, your Councilmembers did not take this lightly, but realized these overdue WWTP improvements were critical for our City, the environment and employees. These improvements add redundancy, improve employee safety, increase treatment and hydraulic capacities,

replace aging facilities and make important environmental updates that meet strict Department of Ecology requirements to protect the Snoqualmie River. Of special note, we are also working with a local nonprofit – North Bend Art and Industry – on plans to add a mural to the new WWTP clarifier tank that fronts SR 202. Look for additional details on that in the coming months.

On the transportation front, we are making progress on designs for a new roundabout on Bendigo Blvd and Mt. Si Blvd, with the goal to ease traffic near the I-90 exit 31 on and off-ramps and improve the entrance to the Outlet Mall. A \$1.4 million grant is funding this design work, which coincides with Simon Properties planning a redesign of the Outlet Mall that will likely lead to more on-site hospitality and restaurant uses.

The contract for the Park Street Overlay project which will install approximately 1,700 linear feet of full width overlay on E. Park Street is nearing approval. The project also includes lane configuration and channelization that when complete will create a separate left/thru lane and right turn lane on westbound Park Street. Construction is anticipated to start later this summer.

To increase pedestrian safety, we are beginning initial design work for a new crosswalk at Cedar Falls Way and Maloney Grove Ave. As part of our sidewalk reinvestment program, later this spring parts of the Forester Woods neighborhood will have some sidewalks reconstructed. We have also started design work for downtown sidewalk improvements on E. 2nd Street – and thanks to generous donations by local businesses, Fury Site Works and Rainier Asphalt, a 400 ft. extension was added to the eastern end of Tanner Trail.

Community Development Projects

I would also like to share updates on some of the more noticeable development projects you see happening around town.

If you have not already heard the buzz, a new butcher shop / deli is coming to the historic downtown core this spring / summer. Falling River Meats is currently remodeling the former ProSki space on North Bend Way. The local Snoqualmie Valley business specializes in humanely raised and locally sourced meats.

Work will resume in early April at the Dahlgren property. Crews will begin utility work, installing watermain pipe to connect to the Centennial Well located underneath our Public Works building. This work will happen along North Bend Way and traffic control measures will be in place as needed. This project will bring 212 new multi-family homes to our City, along with a new 4-acre city park that will connect to King County's Tanner Landing Park to provide direct access to Middle Fork Snoqualmie River.

Work continues on the new Karakoram Snowboard Bindings headquarters on North Bend Way behind the Napa Auto Parts store. Phoenix Plaza received its Temporary Occupancy Certificate last quarter and is now actively renting out retail space and apartments.

You may have noticed some home removal happening on E. Park Street last month. This work is in preparation for a new 28-unit condominium townhome project which will be built by Pulte Homes. Construction is anticipated to start this spring.

The brand new Torguson Skatepark opened earlier this month, with final landscaping work in progress. We are very excited to add this outdoor park amenity to North Bend. Work also continues on the future

Snoqualmie Valley Athletic Complex along SR 202 near Encompass. This private sporting complex will increase field space in the Snoqualmie Valley and attract customers to our local businesses.

Community Engagement, Local Business Support

As I'm sure you are aware, King County moved to Phase 3 of Washington State's Roadmap to Recovery Reopening Plan, which expands capacity to 50% for our local businesses and allows spectators back to local sporting events in a limited capacity. This is great news for our businesses. This move was possible due to declining Covid activity and increasing vaccinations countywide.

The community support of local businesses has been impressive. All winter residents have shopped and eaten locally to keep their favorite restaurants and shops afloat. I encourage you to keep shopping and eating locally. Although capacity restrictions are loosening, our businesses have weathered unprecedented losses and need your continued support to rebound.

Remember, staying in phase 3 is not guaranteed. We must continue to do our part – masking up, spreading out and keeping social circles small – to keep supporting our community businesses and preventing a move backward to phase 2.

On the community engagement front, we are very grateful for the hard work of Eastside Fire & Rescue, which has been assisting with mobile Covid-19 vaccinations of our most at-risk community members. EF&R has spent the past 3 months carefully planning, training and executing vaccinations to protect the North Bend community. Their efforts are helping us reopen and valued community members regain normalcy in their daily lives.

As we progress deeper into 2021, we remain positive and hopeful – knowing we are moving in the right direction. City staff and your elected officials continue with our mission to support and enhance this highly livable community. By working in partnership with our residents, our goals can be achieved, and this beautiful small mountain town will continue to be the unique, vibrant place that we are lucky enough to call home.

Sincerely,

Mayor Rob