



Hello North Bend Residents,

I hope your summer is off to a great start. It's hard not to notice positivity in the air as our state fully reopens and begins a path forward from the Covid-19 pandemic. Thank you to the community for helping us reach this point by following public health guidelines for months on end and getting vaccinated. I am proud to report that at this time over 76% of those living in North Bend zip code 98045 (12 and over) have begun the vaccination process - and we reached a major milestone with 70% of residents now fully vaccinated. This milestone allowed our retailers and restaurants to fully reopen – congrats to all! [As a reminder, if you're not yet vaccinated, appointments are widely available locally.]

It is this accomplishment as well that makes it possible to reopen City Hall to the public next week. As I am sure you can imagine, it is not just as simple as throwing the doors wide open. It has taken us weeks to finalize our reopening plan for both staff and citizens – and we're still working toward a final plan for our hybrid City Council and Commission meetings.

At this time, I am happy to tell you that citizens will be welcomed back inside City Hall on July 12th. There will be some public health guidelines we must follow, and we ask for your assistance and patience when you visit. The Cedar Falls Way entrance will be the only public access point, where you will find a sign in sheet, hand sanitizer, and masking guidelines.

We are targeting September-October to conduct hybrid in-person City Council meetings, yet there are many factors which may impact that. After months of Zoom meetings, I can assure you that your Councilmembers can't wait to return to chambers. We will be releasing more information on those hybrid meetings when we have a more solid plan, but know that we are actively planning to accommodate both in-person and virtual meeting attendees.

As we move into the 3rd quarter of 2021, we want to highlight and share with you some City and community accomplishments during the past three months.

Infrastructure

After nearly two years of construction, Phase 1 of the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) High Priority Improvements Project is essentially complete and the contract for Phase 2 was approved by your City Council which means the project will move seamlessly forward. We expect Phase 2 construction to begin later this summer and be complete in 2023-2024.

These important WWTP improvements are critical to our surrounding environment, safety, economic development and fiscal stability of the city – and of course providing you sound, reliable service. The project was a major undertaking for the City – and one that was decades overdue. When fully complete the project will 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.

We are committed to being a good steward of our local environment and as such, continue evaluating multiple long-term mitigation water options to meet all future requirements of our Centennial Well Water Right, including negotiations with the Sallal Water Association for a wholesale water / mitigation contract. We also continue evaluating alternative mitigation projects.

Some good news on the water conservation front, a recent analysis of North Bend Water Meters vs. Water Production shows the City produced less water in 2020 compared to 2000, even while gaining 700 new water meters. We credit this achievement to aggressive water distribution system leak reduction strategies by our Public Works Department, enhanced water conservation state building codes, wider availability of water-efficient appliances, and our Water Conservation Ordinance. We appreciate our residents' efforts to conserve this limited, natural resource and protect the health of the Snoqualmie River. Thank You!

[Water production vs. meter chart will be inserted here]

As most longtime Washington residents know all too well, summer and fall are construction season for weather-dependent roadway projects. This year is proving to be a busy one for local projects – and we appreciate your patience as we, the State and County work to improve transportation around the area. Some notable projects during the 2021 construction season include the repaving of SR 202 from Snoqualmie Falls Park to Boalch Ave; Reinig Road Revetment repair; a new roundabout at the North Bend Way & 436th Ave SE intersection; and Park Street Overlay and Re-channelization.

We continue our efforts to obtain grants for Transportation Improvement Projects, like the future roundabout at Mt. Si Blvd & Bendigo Blvd for which a \$1.4 million grant is funding engineering design work. We also received an \$800,000 grant for a future roundabout at SR 202 and 4th Street and are hopeful design work will commence this year.

As part of our sidewalk reinvestment program, contractors recently completed reconstructing sidewalks in the Forester Woods neighborhood, improving pedestrian safety. This program to improve sidewalks will continue for years to come as we work through a long list of needed repairs in neighborhoods throughout the city.

Community Development Projects

Work by private contractors continues around town on many projects that will bring services to citizens and more housing diversity to homebuyers and renters.

Sitework recently began for a new 23-unit condo project downtown on E. Park Street. These will be the first new condominiums built in the City in over 20 years and bring a needed homebuying option to residents. Habitat for Humanity is also completing sitework for a new 7-townhome affordable housing community.

The Cedar River Partners (Dahlgren) Project continues, which will bring 212 new multi-family homes. Contractors completed a watermain extension and continue with site utility work. Later during the project, a new 4-acre City park will be constructed that will have direct access to Tanner Landing Park with its Snoqualmie River access for outdoor enthusiasts.

On the commercial front, Wyndham Hotels plans to build a dual-brand hotel inside the Outlet Mall, with the redevelopment of the mall section that contains the Vanity Fair store. The project is in planning

review. Hotel plans include 130 rooms, meeting space and potentially a rooftop bar/restaurant. Puget Sound Energy is also moving through the planning process to bring a new 50,000 sq. ft. training center near Nintendo which will train PSE's future gas and electric workforce. Lastly, the WA military department closed on the land purchase for the future National Guard Readiness Center near Truck Town.

On the new business front, a Wells Fargo branch opened in the former visitor's center near Bartell's and Ignition Café opened near QFC. Also expected to open this summer is Falling River Meats - a new butcher shop downtown, Britt Greenland Gallery, and the Snoqualmie Valley Athletic Complex.

New Council Legislation

Last month your City Council approved Form Based Code (FBC) for the Downtown Commercial Zone. FBC emphasizes the relationship between buildings and public spaces, as well as the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another. With an emphasis on public spaces, the form-based approach is optimal for creating and sustaining places where people want to be, which will enhance the economic vitality of the City's downtown core. We are confident this is the right move for our downtown, and as more aging buildings are re-developed, FBC will help attain the desired character for the Downtown Commercial zone and ensure any new development is in scale and character with the existing area.

Public Engagement / Supporting Local

In late June, after Gov. Inslee eased some Covid-19 restrictions in response to the historic heatwave, we were able to open City Hall as an emergency cooling shelter. Our staff pitched in, graciously volunteering their time to man the cooling center over the weekend. Public safety is our number one priority, and we were happy to serve the community in this way.

We also held an important Wildfire Resiliency & Preparedness Town Hall last month, with experts from Eastside Fire & Rescue and King Conservation District providing invaluable information to prepare our homes and community in the event of wildfires. If you'd like to see the meeting recording, visit the Media Center on the City website. Not too long after this Town Hall, I made the decision to issue an emergency declaration prohibiting aerial fireworks, as the wildfire risk was just too high. We consulted the experts and feel we made the right decision for public safety and in protection of our surrounding environment.

Here at City Hall, we're feeling positive and excited about the future. Our City is evolving and with that comes change, but not all change is bad. Your elected officials, myself included, as well as staff are dedicated to the livability and character of our small mountain town, which includes welcoming new residents to the North Bend way of life. We do our best to make improvements that we hope also enhance your daily lives, all while respecting citizen voices and our City's history.

Thank you to everyone for helping our local businesses survive the pandemic and supporting us during this unprecedented 1+ year. It is a pleasure to serve this vibrant, beautiful place we are all lucky enough to call HOME.

Sincerely,

Mayor Rob

