

# Quarterly Message

## from the Mayor



Dear North Bend Residents,

As you know, no one does summer like North Bend. Our farmers markets are a lively community hub of music and local produce. Ice cream and froyo tastes that much better when you enjoy it while people-watching downtown. Picking berries with Mt. Si, Rattlesnake, and Teneriffe as a backdrop adds a quality of magic to the experience that is unique to our mountain town.

Yet, we are experiencing one of those occasional summers hotter than the norm in the Snoqualmie Valley. Talk around town is that the Snoqualmie River's flow looks lower than typical for August. Your observations are accurate. This year's unseasonably dry spring has reduced the usual healthy snowpack throughout the watershed.

The combination of early heat events and dry weather has resulted in drought declarations in 12 counties so far throughout Washington State. While it has not been issued for King County, we recognize that the health of the Snoqualmie River can always benefit from water conservation, and it goes beyond North Bend. River levels affect our neighboring and downstream communities as much as they do our town. Taking all this into consideration, we began our annual Water Conservation Ordinance (WCO) one week early this year, on August 8.



As always, the intent of the WCO is to provide conservation education, awareness, and to do our part. This is our fourth year of the Ordinance, and we are thankful for the support of so many of you – our residents and City water customers – as partners in conservation.

Did you know that City water service customers have not increased water consumption in 20 years? In addition to our WCO, there are a variety of reasons, like ongoing efforts to replace old, leaking watermain, our requirement of more efficient fixtures in new homes, smarter irrigation practices, and work to replace older water meters.

### Infrastructure and Transportation Improvements

Your city is dynamic and proactive, thanks in part to grant supported connectivity improvements and planning – but this quarter was particularly momentous. After nearly two decades of research and focus work between the City and Sallal Water Association, Council voted unanimously on June 6 to approve a resolution



Signing the WSA - Pictured: Mayor McFarland, Councilmembers Rosen and Koellen, City Clerk Susie Oppedal. Photo courtesy Councilmember Miller.

authorizing an agreement for the wholesale supply of domestic water to Sallal and mitigation water to the City.

It was a pivotal moment in my four years of service as your mayor. With a fully approved and signed Water Supply Agreement, the City and Sallal will be able to meet the water needs of all residents and property owners in our respective service areas, while also meeting mitigation requirements for the Snoqualmie River. By sharing water, the two entities help ensure a more reliable water system with guaranteed availability and the support for future community planning requirements under Washington State's Growth Management Act.

It's a good solution that maintains Sallal as an independent business while both of us meet public requirements as water districts. Happening right now is engineering design to build the interties which serve as the means to share water.

On the transportation front, Council approved the Six-year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) following a public hearing in June. The TIP is an essential tool used in improving and maintaining our multi-modal transportation

infrastructure. It prioritizes projects by need and availability of funds, and if you haven't had a chance to look yet, I recommend you visit the [Six-Year TIP webpage](#). It is a great way to familiarize yourself with upcoming transportation improvements in town.

I must take a moment to congratulate local service organizations Snoqualmie Valley Transportation and the Mt. Si Senior Center, respectively, which alongside with the cities of North Bend and Snoqualmie, received the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) Vision 2050 award. The award recognizes organizations that promote a livable region by helping to implement regional growth management and economic and transportation strategies. I'm very proud of North Bend's role in making this possible. We value our partnership with PSRC, as a recipient of multiple transportation grants which not only improve mobility in our community, but also save taxpayers money.



Receiving PSRC's Vision 2050 Award; pictured here: SVT Executive Director Amy Biggs and Mayor McFarland, with PSRC Executive Director Josh Brown.

Excitement is also ramping up as two community reinvestment projects are quickly taking shape on Cedar Falls Way: the Stilson crosswalk and sidewalk, and the Maloney Grove crosswalk and sidewalk gap connection. These projects will further our work in increasing walking connectivity and safety throughout North Bend through traffic calming features.



Community reinvestment projects: Maloney Grove and Cedar Falls Way crosswalk and sidewalk gap filling, and Stilson and Cedar Falls way sidewalk and crosswalk.



Celebrating the completion of the 136<sup>th</sup> and 436<sup>th</sup> RAB: Development Project Manager Brian Tucker, Kyle Kvietkus & Casey McCune with Greystar, Mike Day with Fury Construction, Public Works Director Mark Rigos, Councilmember Miller, Mayor McFarland, City Administrator David Miller.

Though a little different in nature, another reinvestment project nearing completion is a series of ongoing sidewalk projects that fix damage caused primarily by tree roots. This summer, we worked in the New Si View neighborhood repairing sidewalks while working to preserve as many mature street trees as possible. I think you will appreciate the enhanced beautification and universal accessibility in New Si View, as well as Forster Woods and our downtown corridor.

And I hope you are enjoying the traffic calming of our new, development-funded, roundabout at 436th and Southeast 136th Street next to the River Run apartments. Stay tuned as we anticipate work will begin on another roundabout project in 2025, located at Mt. Si Boulevard and Bendigo Blvd/SR 202.

### Community Development Projects

We are working hard to modernize, and in some instances, transform our infrastructure to fit our community's needs. Similarly, the Growth Management Act requires cities and counties in Washington State to periodically update their comprehensive plans, so that our work is consistent with your changing needs. The Comprehensive Plan contains elements like land use, housing, utilities, parks, recreation, and more. It is the guidebook to how the City will look in the future.

Staff have been working for more than a year now on this periodic update. Soon to come will be a variety of outreach opportunities so keep an eye out for invitations to participate. You are an important part of the update, and we want to hear from you.

Our Complete Streets Plan has become an essential part of our Comprehensive Plan.





The City is creating an integrated transportation network that is accessible, safe, and convenient for people of all ages and abilities to get around town, and thanks to your participation in multiple open house events and a survey held in June, we are that much closer to designing a significantly enhanced North Bend Way corridor. What will this look like? More dark sky-friendly street lighting, accessibility, and connectivity are a few key aspects our community identified as important for North Bend Way.



*Celebrating Tollgate Farm upgrades at a ribbon cutting ceremony in June.*

Regarding connectivity, you have likely noticed that Tollgate Farm Park added a significant new feature with the addition of a new, fully operational barn and restored farmhouse. The park is consistent with the updated Parks Element of our Comprehensive Plan. It is a result of our collaborative partnership with Si View Metropolitan Park District, which maintains and programs facilities and amenities on city properties such as this 410-acre historic farm.

This park is already offering agricultural programs, providing incubator space for local farmers, and when complete, it will be home to youth and adult programs, farm-based experimental learning opportunities – even, perhaps, a farm stand.

## Human Services

We recognize that a healthy community is one that invests in a variety of services that support its residents. The Snoqualmie Valley is home to so many human services organizations stepping up to ever-increasing needs. As part of the budget cycle, the City allocates funding to nonprofits that serve our community. These organizations include those serving the homeless, those needing supplemental food, and a variety of services to youth and teens in the valley. While there seems to never be enough, I am proud that Council has recognized and supported proposed budget increases in this area over the past three years and I am confident we will keep up this needed investment in our community's health.



Another part of a healthy community is one with vibrant arts and entertainment; it is seen as fundamental to our mental health. North Bend is not a large city of course and our resources are limited. While we have traditionally invested support through such things as fee waivers for events and direct grants to organizations in support of events like the Blues and Jazz Walks, the Festival at

Mt Si, and of course the very popular Downtown Block Party, I feel we are at a point where we can take a more coordinated role in support for the arts.

At my direction, we have begun to explore what a more programmatic approach would look like, and how we would evaluate the requests that come with it. This fall, I hope to be working with Council on a plan including a designated budget for arts and culture.

Speaking of human services and general health and wellbeing, this applies to our city staff as well. We work hard to create a workplace that supports the teams needed to provide the quality public services you expect. Your city is made up of nearly 50 employees in Public Works, Finance, Community and Economic Development, and Administrative Services departments.



These people – many residents or neighbors like you – care about our community, and we care about them. Early this summer, the City was honored for the 13th year in a row with a WellCity distinction from the Association of Washington Cities. So, what does it mean to be a WellCity?

WellCities provide quality, sustainable benefits, and promote a healthy workplace culture, in turn leading to happy and productive employees that are fully engaged in serving their communities, who appreciate the opportunity to serve you.

## New Businesses

Our business community is growing here in North Bend. I attribute much of the success of our local economy to collaborative businesses and nonprofits that

are invested in our highly livable town. And of course, new residents create the opportunity and demand for expanded services. This summer alone we welcomed a great deal of new businesses to town, including:

**- Mountain Rescue Center - Adidas - Scott Rinckenberger Gallery - Blake's Auto Detail - Friends and Co - North Bend Art & Industry - Main Street Pilates - SnoFalls Plumbing**

In the way of new organizations, I recently had the opportunity to tour the Army National Guard Readiness Center in Tumwater alongside several councilmembers and staff. In 2019, the Washington State Army National Guard brought plans to create a center at 468th Avenue SE. A North Bend Readiness Center would house administrative, training, storage space, and importantly, provide support for public and community groups, and it would be equipped to assist in the event of community-wide emergencies. Ordinance of any kind would never – I repeat,



*Touring the Center: Councilmembers Miller and Koellen, Mayor McFarland.*

never – be discharged at the Readiness Center. Large-scale munitions would not be stored there either, as it would be a training and equipment maintenance center, with the primary focus on classroom training. We look forward to seeing a formal project application, and in the meantime, property owner Puget Western is proceeding with a temporary Laydown Construction Yard that supports a regional utility project. We anticipate that temporary use for two years.

Council is always looking for new ways to better understand changes coming at us, and how we can better meet them. In June, they approved the Economic Development Action Plan, a guide that incorporates input from community stakeholders with specific, actionable strategies for staff, in addition to providing guidance to Council on issues relating to the economic health and well-being of the City. This plan is oriented to the actions in business growth and job supporting investments needed to more holistically meet community needs.

## Public Safety

In July, Snoqualmie-North Bend Police Chief Perry Phipps resigned from the department. Perry was instrumental in launching the Behavioral Health Response program, hiring the department's first Mental Health Officer, and it was under his leadership that the department grew its commitment to community policing, enforcing its longstanding motto, 'no call too small.' Council, staff, and I am grateful for Perry's years of service and dedication to our mountain town. I for one will miss his steady hand at the helm.

While the search for a new Chief takes place, Snoqualmie Mayor Ross has appointed Police Captain Brian Lynch to serve as Interim Police Chief, and he is doing a great job. Our contract for police services does not include direct involvement in hiring, but we anticipate being engaged in the process for this critical role.

## Community Engagement

Our two biggest summer festivals, Downtown Block Party and the Festival at Mt. Si, were back this summer, and they were bigger than ever. Thousands of locals and visitors partook in a variety of activities – be it the Encompass Kid Zone, live music, fireworks, or the Grand Parade.

In July, I resumed a series of outreach opportunities called Meet up with the Mayor, where I invite residents to stop by a North Bend business, and support our local economy while enjoying conversation. Please, get yourself a fresh smoothie and join me for the next meet up, on September 9 at Pressed on Main.



Another way we have worked this summer to gain residents' perspectives on City services is through an anonymous, citywide survey. The results are in, and we look forward to sharing them with you! Community Survey responses will influence strategic direction on many fronts, including financial choices, service adjustments, direction of our City Council and Administration, and day-to-day work for city staff. We plan to repeat the survey in coming years to monitor and address feedback.

As always, it is a pleasure to serve this community. As your mayor, I will never lose sight of our mission to deliver quality public services in partnership with our citizens.

Sincerely,

*Mayor Rob*