



Whatcom County Construction Industry's Whatcom County Candidate Forum & Debate

Thank you for joining us tonight! Associated General Contractors of Washington, Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce, Building Industry Association of Whatcom County and the Whatcom County Realtors Association are pleased to offer to our members and the community, a great format for the Whatcom County Council and County Executive candidates to share their views and perspectives on a variety of issues that are important to our respective memberships and the community as a whole.

Attached you will find the written responses that have been asked of our County Council candidates to provide to you to have a better understanding of their view of how they look to address issues facing our community. Below are the 6 questions that we posed to the candidates:

Question #1 The Economy : Part A:

Whatcom County is facing a variety of economic development issues. Specify your plan to attract, support, and expand a vibrant economy, with emphasis on further development of current businesses and attraction of outside entities that are compatible. Elaborate on plans for commercial and industrial infrastructure expansion, i.e. a place for future jobs.

Part B: Considering recent retail/restaurant closures, pending layoffs, and a potential recession, what are your plans to ensure a successful environment for our current business community?

Question #2 Housing:

Whatcom County is in a housing crisis situation that demands action. In July 2019, the Business & Commerce Advisory Committee recommended a crisis determination and corrective action to the County Council. How will you resolve the housing crisis? (Please elaborate on concepts of housing v. houses, zoning, annexations, land availability, costs, and supply & demand.?)

Question #3 Workforce Development

The construction industry is facing a labor shortage that is further complicated by craftspeople nearing retirement age. How will you address workforce development to fill open positions in construction and improve economic opportunities for county residents?

Question #4 Cherry Point Comprehensive Plan

Cherry Point Industrial Zone is home to more than 3,320 jobs with an average wage of \$110,690. Cherry Point businesses pay over \$385 million in local taxes and donate more than \$1 million to youth activities and athletics. What is your view on the proposed Whatcom County Code amendments that address the Comprehensive Plan for Cherry Point Policy 2CC-16 and response to Resolution 2019-004? What actions will you take?

Question #5 Environment:



BELLINGHAM REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



**Whatcom County
Association of REALTORS®**

The County is facing a variety of natural resource issues such as WRIA 1 and the Hirst decision on water, agriculture, and the Whatcom County Climate Impact Advisory Committee. What policies do you support and what action steps will be taken to implementation?

Question #6 Tribal Relations:

What is effective tribal consultation and what will you do to work cooperatively with local tribes?

Thank you for joining us this evening!

COUNCIL CANDIDATE RESPONSES

Brian Estes; District 4

Question #1 The Economy : Part A: Whatcom County is facing a variety of economic development issues. Specify your plan to attract, support, and expand a vibrant economy, with emphasis on further development of current businesses and attraction of outside entities that are compatible. Elaborate on plans for commercial and industrial infrastructure expansion, i.e. a place for future jobs.

Anyone who works full time should not struggle financially. Yet, almost 40% of Whatcom County families live in or near poverty. Lack of family wage jobs is a critical issue throughout the county, and we need better strategies to create higher wage jobs, so housing and childcare is more affordable.

We need to bring more of the recent strong job growth across Washington State to Whatcom County. Better partnerships between the Port of Bellingham and Whatcom County's economic development team will help. Many other groups such as regional and local chambers of commerce, organized labor, businesses from the agricultural, heavy and light industry, manufacturing, technology, and others should focus like a laser on creating high wage jobs.

These groups have had some success but a lot more can be done. Better collaboration is needed between the Port and Whatcom County with workforce development organizations and high school, community college, and 4-year college programs to target creating jobs in high wage professions.

Whatcom County can partner with organized labor to strengthen apprenticeships, paid internships, and more job training or retraining in high wage labor trades and other professions.

In addition, near term, we need for significantly more funding for educational and job training programs that emphasize science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) as well as more job training for high wage jobs in fields such as robotics, artificial intelligence, computer technology and software engineering.

Also, medium to long term, we must consider adjusting our workforce to adapt to a changing climate. This may mean, for example, producing different or adaptive agricultural products; more reliance on renewable fuel production and more emphasis on higher wage jobs in renewable or alternative energy sectors. Current infrastructure issues in Whatcom County include: rail and oil pipeline safety; adequate funding for road maintenance and repair; designing urban roadways that encourage mobility choice; , expanding internet and cellular service county-wide; earthquake planning and preparedness including seismic



BELLINGHAM REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



**Whatcom County
Association of REALTORS®**

retrofit where needed; infrastructure and public/private utility protection from cyber intrusion, stronger linkages between land use and transportation planning to accommodate growth sustainably, among other issues.

Part B: Considering recent retail/restaurant closures, pending layoffs, and a potential recession, what are your plans to ensure a successful environment for our current business community?

Some business closures are cyclic or due to factors beyond the control of government. Some relief from B&O taxes, tax credits for businesses initiating job training or retraining, as well as efforts to lower housing costs, will keep Whatcom County's economy vibrant and will minimize the impact of a recession on business.

Question #2 Housing: Whatcom County is in a housing crisis situation that demands action. In July 2019, the Business & Commerce Advisory Committee recommended a crisis determination and corrective action to the County Council. How will you resolve the housing crisis? (Please elaborate on concepts of housing v. houses, zoning, annexations, land availability, costs, and supply & demand?)

Resolving rising housing costs requires partnerships and a role, both severally and jointly, by government, the non-profit sector, and the private sector. Government can facilitate public housing with workforce affordability; non-profits can build lower income housing and benefit from government tax credits; and to create more affordable housing the private sector can build multifamily housing with incentives like Bellingham's Multi Family Tax Exemption program.

Further, the County Council should order an audit or review of the permitting process, permitting costs, and a customer service review of the residential and commercial planning and permitting process. Costs have risen to the point where they provide a disincentive to build workforce housing.

Additional options include clustered higher density housing in the downtown core of Whatcom County's smaller cities and similar housing in LAMRIDs as well. Looking ahead, a rural form of transit-oriented development along major N/S and E/W arterials in the county might be worth considering. This will provide greater linkage between land use and transportation and preserve farmland.

Question #3 Workforce Development The construction industry is facing a labor shortage that is further complicated by craftspeople nearing retirement age. How will you address workforce development to fill open positions in construction and improve economic opportunities for county residents?

See response to #2 above.

Question #4 Cherry Point Comprehensive Plan Cherry Point Industrial Zone is home to more than 3,320 jobs with an average wage of \$110,690. Cherry Point businesses pay over \$385 million in local taxes and donate more than \$1 million to youth activities and athletics. What is your view on the proposed Whatcom County Code amendments that address the Comprehensive Plan for Cherry Point Policy 2CC-16 and response to Resolution 2019-004? What actions will you take?



BELLINGHAM REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



Whatcom County
Association of REALTORS®

Cherry Point has some of the highest wage jobs in Whatcom County. They are an essential part of Whatcom County's economy and provide many benefits to the community.

At the same time, the energy industry is changing. Demand for oil is forecast to decline within 10 years, and clean energy jobs are the future. Cherry Point workers should not be left behind. We need the skills of the talented men and women who work at Cherry Point to build a new energy economy. They can help us do that.

Preserving these very important high wage jobs now, and in 10, 20, 30, or 40 years demands planning for that future right now. People once traveled by horse and buggy. We lit our homes with whale oil. We don't do that anymore. We need to innovate in the same way we have in the past. That's what creates good jobs--innovation, new ideas, people power.

Americans have always embraced progress and innovation and we should not shirk from this challenge. We can grow our economy and protect the environment with high wage clean energy jobs and transition to those jobs over time. I'm encouraged by Phillips 66 plans to develop a renewable diesel plant at Cherry Point creating an additional 200 jobs. They need to provide details to some important questions, but the initial conversations suggest a project that could have broad community support.

As I understand the current moratorium, it principally relates to preventing crude exports. I support refining oil here as it creates many more jobs than simply loading a tanker and having that oil refined elsewhere.

At the same time, the County's comprehensive plan currently under review, should properly balance land use, environmental protections, and public safety, if refinery capacity is expanded. I support refinery expansion subject to those provisions.

As your county Council Representative, I will fight for policies that ensure that the refineries can easily get the permits that they need for health and safety process improvements. And I will work to make sure that the permitting process protects the community from unnecessary impacts in a way that is fair and transparent so that they these companies can continue to have a healthy relationship with Whatcom County.

Question #5 Environment: The County is facing a variety of natural resource issues such as WRIA 1 and the Hirst decision on water, agriculture, and the Whatcom County Climate Impact Advisory Committee. What policies do you support and what action steps will be taken to implementation?

I want to provide new leadership on the County Council to resolve current water resource issues. This affects fish, farms, and families. For residential development, farm production, and other commercial activities to move forward we must have greater certainty about water availability than currently exists. We need a new vision and fresh leadership for how to move forward on this issue. Other watershed areas of the state, such as Walla Walla, Yakima, and Dungeness on the Olympic Peninsula, have faced a similar situation and have made progress in resolving watershed issues. Some relief from Olympia may be needed as well, such as revisiting the "use it or lose it" water rights policy related to trading of water rights or water exchanges. Some interim regulatory flexibility, as was



BELLINGHAM REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



Whatcom County
Association of REALTORS®

done in the Walla Walla case, may also help resolve some issues. We can do the same in Whatcom County. We need a locally crafted solution, not one imposed by Olympia. If we work together, a solution is possible.

Question #6 Tribal Relations: What is effective tribal consultation and what will you do to work cooperatively with local tribes?

Whatcom County has an obligation to honor the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott. County programs such as public health, criminal justice, environmental planning, and watershed resource management are just a few of the programs and policies that Whatcom County should partner with tribal nations for the mutual benefit of all of Whatcom County. Also, Whatcom County's board and commissions should have representatives from the native American community.

Kathy Kershner; District 4

Question #1 The Economy : Part A: Whatcom County is facing a variety of economic development issues. Specify your plan to attract, support, and expand a vibrant economy, with emphasis on further development of current businesses and attraction of outside entities that are compatible. Elaborate on plans for commercial and industrial infrastructure expansion, i.e. a place for future jobs.

Answer: Before we can attract more businesses to Whatcom County, we have to solve our housing issues. Businesses will not locate or expand here if there is no housing for their employees. It is critical that the City of Bellingham adopt plans to take on their fair share of the housing growth coming to Whatcom County. We have areas for business development that have not been fully utilized, areas like the Port of Bellingham waterfront and the industrial zone land at Cherry Point. We should be encouraging expansion in those locations as well as the currently zoned areas for business. I would invite the business community to the discussion as well.

Part B: Considering recent retail/restaurant closures, pending layoffs, and a potential recession, what are your plans to ensure a successful environment for our current business community?

I can't stop a recession, but I can make sure my decisions don't make it worse than it has to be. During a recession, governments must contract their services. I saw this happen in 2009 and 2010. It is hard and it is painful, but there simply won't be the tax revenue once a recession is upon us. Businesses will be tightening their belts and the county government must do the same. One thing you can count on, I will not be making it harder for our industries in this county to do business.

Question #2 Housing: Whatcom County is in a housing crisis situation that demands action. In July 2019, the Business & Commerce Advisory Committee recommended a crisis determination and corrective action to the County Council. How will you resolve the housing crisis? (Please elaborate on concepts of housing v. houses, zoning, annexations, land availability, costs, and supply & demand?)



BELLINGHAM REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



Whatcom County
Association of REALTORS®

This crisis has been at least a decade in the making and people paying attention could see this coming from a mile away. When the City of Bellingham purposefully planned to house fewer people than the OFM median number recommended when Comprehensive Plans were being updated, it is no wonder we don't have enough housing for the people who have moved here. And when Urban Growth Areas were removed from the land supply and areas that should have had homes built on them were turned into parks, the City of Bellingham lost the capacity to build an additional 4500 homes. With a lack of land supply, houses aren't built. With a lack of housing options, prices go up. Bellingham has taken 11% of the new growth over the last decade while the small cities have absorbed 20-25% of the growth. Our small cities are at risk of losing their small-town character and have had infrastructure problems of their own to deal with because the City of Bellingham has failed in their responsibility to plan for growth.

Question #3 Workforce Development The construction industry is facing a labor shortage that is further complicated by craftspeople nearing retirement age. How will you address workforce development to fill open positions in construction and improve economic opportunities for county residents?

I have long thought our high school students need more options than moving onto a 4-year university that will enslave them with debt levels they may not ever be able to pay off. Construction industry internships for those interested in the trades should be available for every senior in high school with an option to hire on after completing some sort of training program. And people who work hard for a living want and deserve to live in a home they can afford. We have got to solve the housing issue if we want to attract and retain talent to our county.

Question #4 Cherry Point Comprehensive Plan Cherry Point Industrial Zone is home to more than 3,320 jobs with an average wage of \$110,690. Cherry Point businesses pay over \$385 million in local taxes and donate more than \$1 million to youth activities and athletics. What is your view on the proposed Whatcom County Code amendments that address the Comprehensive Plan for Cherry Point Policy 2CC-16 and response to Resolution 2019-004? What actions will you take?

I think the county council wasted over \$150,000 of your tax dollars and mine to hire an outside special interest environmental law firm to write these amendments that are designed to shut down our Cherry Point industries. I am fervently against the code amendments and the comprehensive plan policy changes. I will vote no and I will continue to fight against these amendments when elected to the council.

Question #5 Environment: The County is facing a variety of natural resource issues such as WRIA 1 and the Hirst decision on water, agriculture, and the Whatcom County Climate Impact Advisory Committee. What policies do you support and what action steps will be taken to implementation?

I support the county council doing its job to solve the water allocation issues and not passing the buck to the Department of Ecology to make the determination. I support making sure there are farmers on the agriculture advisory committee. Agriculture in Whatcom County has been doing some pretty innovative things and continues to find better ways to produce our food and protect our environment. I haven't seen a policy come out of the Whatcom County Climate Impact Advisory Committee that I could support.



BELLINGHAM REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



Whatcom County
Association of REALTORS®

Question #6 Tribal Relations: What is effective tribal consultation and what will you do to work cooperatively with local tribes?

Effective tribal consultation occurs when the tribe is invited to participate in the process of solving whatever problem or issue is at hand. I have always worked cooperatively with our local tribes and have been supported by them as a candidate and council member.

Ben Elenbaas; District 4

We did not receive responses from the candidate.

Natalie McClendon; District 4

Question #1 The Economy : Part A: Whatcom County is facing a variety of economic development issues. Specify your plan to attract, support, and expand a vibrant economy, with emphasis on further development of current businesses and attraction of outside entities that are compatible. Elaborate on plans for commercial and industrial infrastructure expansion, i.e. a place for future jobs.

Capitalism and the free market are able to function with the structure government provides. This structure includes bankruptcy protection, property rights, a stable money supply, corporate charters, and the enforcement of laws. Even regulations and social programs help sustain a market economy by fixing many of its serious social and economic problems. The Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan is our plan for economic development, as it lays out what we want to do with transportation, utilities, capital facilities, housing, resources lands, etc. We have a plan, we need to work our plan. If the plan is inadequate we need to amend it.

Part B: Considering recent retail/restaurant closures, pending layoffs, and a potential recession, what are your plans to ensure a successful environment for our current business community?

The only thing local government can do to prepare for a recession is to not over-extend it's finances, or invest tax holdings in risky wall street schemes. Markets are changing and in a free-market economy, businesses have to make their own decisions about what is profitable and what is a bad risk. It's not the government's role to prop up unprofitable businesses just because they are local.

Question #2 Housing: Whatcom County is in a housing crisis situation that demands action. In July 2019, the Business & Commerce Advisory Committee recommended a crisis determination and corrective action to the County Council. How will you resolve the housing crisis? (Please elaborate on concepts of housing v. houses, zoning, annexations, land availability, costs, and supply & demand?)

The issue of affordable housing is primarily an economic class issue. For Whatcom County, it is also a simple issue of supply and demand. Too many people want to live here and many come from higher-cost places with cash to spend on housing, without the need for a local job. So there is a disconnect between the price of housing and the average wages offered locally.



BELLINGHAM REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



**Whatcom County
Association of REALTORS®**

Whatcom county's small cities are growing, and the cost of housing is rising, because of pressure from people in Bellingham looking for affordable housing. So we need to pay attention to what Bellingham does on this issue. Bellingham has offered incentives to developers to build dense housing in "urban villages" for over a decade, but with few takers. We can no longer wait for the private sector to step up to build affordable housing. We must proceed with public and non-profit projects to address housing needs now.

We have some great non-profit and government programs in Whatcom County working on increasing the housing supply for low and moderate-income households. The bottleneck is, of course, funding. I am currently exploring with some community partners the establishment of a fund to support more projects.

The County has jurisdiction over land outside of incorporated cities. There is constant pressure to make more of this land available for housing. Decisions about annexation, zoning, etc must be made in a comprehensive way, balancing the needs for a variety of land uses.

Question #3 Workforce Development: The construction industry is facing a labor shortage that is further complicated by craftspeople nearing retirement age. How will you address workforce development to fill open positions in construction and improve economic opportunities for county residents?

County government can require apprenticeship utilization on their own building projects. I would be interested in hearing of other ways the building industry thinks county government can help with workforce development. Comprehensive immigration reform would be a good start, but that's not really up to the County Council.

Question #4 Cherry Point Comprehensive Plan; Cherry Point Industrial Zone is home to more than 3,320 jobs with an average wage of \$110,690. Cherry Point businesses pay over \$385 million in local taxes and donate more than \$1 million to youth activities and athletics. What is your view on the proposed Whatcom County Code amendments that address the Comprehensive Plan for Cherry Point Policy 2CC-16 and response to Resolution 2019-004? What actions will you take?

The Cherry Point Urban Growth Area is the only heavy industry zone in the county, and as such is an important element in our mix of land uses for employment and tax base. It was chosen mainly for its deep water port access, but without sufficient regard for the impact on cultural heritage sites and aquatic resources in and off-shore of the zone, which has resulted in on-going conflicts over the use of the land and water. I support the Comprehensive Plan policy of encouraging future developments and expansion of clean and reduced carbon emitting technology in the UGA and potentially new heavy industrial sites. We must work with the Cherry Point industries to envision a new chapter for Whatcom County's economy, by creating new family-wage jobs in clean energy technologies. I propose that the county convene a visioning process with all stakeholders, possibly with the help and guidance of planning, technology, and business professionals from WWU.

Question #5 Environment: The County is facing a variety of natural resource issues such as WRIA 1 and the Hirst decision on water, agriculture, and the Whatcom County Climate Impact Advisory Committee. What policies do you support and what action steps will be taken to implementation?



BELLINGHAM REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



Whatcom County
Association of REALTORS®

With the last few years of 4-month summer drought rather than 2 months, farmers are finally getting the message that we do not have too much water. But this just gets the conversation started. Increased water use efficiency is the quickest and most cost effective way to address this issue. Much good work is being done in the county on salmon recovery, watershed management and ecosystem recovery, in conjunction with the cities, tribes, PUD and Fish and Wildlife. The County Council needs to continue to support this work and fund it. One important task is outreach to the community, and individual Council members could participate in that outreach. The Whatcom County Conservation District is particularly suited to working directly with landowners on this issue.

Question #6 Tribal Relations: What is effective tribal consultation and what will you do to work cooperatively with local tribes?

Tribal Sovereignty is the status of an Independent Nation within a larger Nation State. Self Determination is the right to plan for the future of the Nation with outside cooperation and support, rather than interference. Effective tribal consultation requires recognition of their sovereignty and federal treaty rights beyond the borders of their reservation lands. I have working relationships with a number of tribal leaders and plan to build on these relationships.

Carol Frazey: At-Large Position B

Question #1 The Economy: Part A: Whatcom County is facing a variety of economic development issues. Specify your plan to attract, support, and expand a vibrant economy, with emphasis on further development of current businesses and attraction of outside entities that are compatible. Elaborate on plans for commercial and industrial infrastructure expansion, i.e. a place for future jobs.

To have a thriving community, we must strive to keep our current businesses in Whatcom County and attract new, innovative businesses. Currently, our County's Economic Development Director, Don Goldberg is busy attracting new business to our region. Also, there is currently an infrastructure mapping project being conducted to see where infrastructure currently exists. This will allow us to see the most economically feasible areas to develop and grow.

I envision future develop occurring along the I-5 corridor. We are lucky to have a diverse industrial base so that our local economy does not rely on one business. Our area would be a fit for innovative energy production like solar panels. Also, since Whatcom Community College is one of the only institutions providing a degree in cybersecurity and that we are a US border county, our county would be ideal for industry focused on security.

Another economic asset will be broadband access for rural parts of the county. The project will begin in 2020 and start by providing the broadband backbone from Bellingham to Glacier. The access will allow for more innovative farming techniques, business expansion, education, and entrepreneurship throughout the county.



BELLINGHAM REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



**Whatcom County
Association of REALTORS®**

In addition, I will support more local agricultural products like Whatcom Red Smoothies. The whole process, from growing the berries to printing the labels, is done here in Whatcom County. We can work together to help locally grown crops be processed and sold here in Whatcom County.

Part B: Considering recent retail/restaurant closures, pending layoffs, and a potential recession, what are your plans to ensure a successful environment for our current business community?

Ensuring that we continue to have diverse industries in our county is key to Whatcom County's economic stability. We need a variety of types of businesses so that our economy is not just based one key manufacturer or industry. We have seen the effects of this in many mid-western towns, so we must continue to grow our industrial diversity.

To have a successful environment for current businesses, we must also have thriving workers. Workers need a variety of housing options and enough quality childcare options in order to stay in our community. We must work together with private businesses, non-profits, financial institutions, and government to find creative ways to provide quality childcare and workforce housing.

Question #2 Housing: Whatcom County is in a housing crisis situation that demands action. In July 2019, the Business & Commerce Advisory Committee recommended a crisis determination and corrective action to the County Council. How will you resolve the housing crisis? (Please elaborate on concepts of housing v. houses, zoning, annexations, land availability, costs, and supply & demand?)

To be a sustainable, healthy community, we need to have a variety of housing options for our residents. I am on the Business and Commerce Advisory Committee and the members brought forward a list of action items on how to establish work-force housing. This is housing that is affordable for those working. Not only do we need affordable housing in Whatcom County, but we also need work-force housing that allows people making a good wage to afford a mortgage.

While many of the Business and Commerce Advisory Committee's suggestions would have an impact (like higher height limits and higher density), most of these recommendations must be made at the city level. As the Whatcom County Council, we do not have jurisdiction over the cities.

Also, as a County Council, we must balance the need to preserve valuable farmland and make sure there are enough available housing options for our residents.

A lot of families in Whatcom County are really struggling right now. The median yearly salary is \$54,000 and the median home price is over \$400,000. This is a problem. As a council member, I support the creative, well-planned-out, fiscally-responsible programs that help make housing affordable in Whatcom County.

The Kulshan Community Land Trust is an excellent model for providing affordable housing in our county. Volunteers, businesses, a variety of financial institutions, non-profits, and government agencies are coming together to make home buying a reality for many families.



BELLINGHAM REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



**Whatcom County
Association of REALTORS®**

Other solutions that I support are tax incentives for multi-family units and inclusionary zoning. We need to have different types of homes and affordability in every community. It will take a variety of programs brought forward by many different entities to help make housing affordable for all.

Question #3 Workforce Development The construction industry is facing a labor shortage that is further complicated by craftspeople nearing retirement age. How will you address workforce development to fill open positions in construction and improve economic opportunities for county residents?

Building a resilient and abundant construction labor force base starts at the school-level. Currently, area businesses are starting to provide educational tours for our area high schools to provide a more diverse look at career options for our children.

Also, many businesses are designing their own apprenticeship programs. The Youth Engagement Initiative (YEI) designed by The Whatcom Business Alliance is helping our area youth with career options based on their own preferences and individual skills.

As you may have heard, the Whatcom County Council is contemplating an ordinance to insure that apprenticeship programs are supported by Whatcom County by requiring 15% of the workers be apprentices on any construction county job over \$1Million. As with any educational program, we must ensure that these valuable educational opportunities are available in any economy, not just when things are booming and it is easy to do.

Educating our children about the possibilities of careers is the first step with helping to increase the number of craftspeople and construction workers. By giving more information and opportunities to our children, they can find their own career path and help our economy. Working together, we can provide our youth rewarding careers and that provide family-wage jobs.

Question #4 Cherry Point Comprehensive Plan Cherry Point Industrial Zone is home to more than 3,320 jobs with an average wage of \$110,690. Cherry Point businesses pay over \$385 million in local taxes and donate more than \$1 million to youth activities and athletics. What is your view on the proposed Whatcom County Code amendments that address the Comprehensive Plan for Cherry Point Policy 2CC-16 and response to Resolution 2019-004? What actions will you take?

I support the jobs at Cherry Point. We recently passed the 7th moratorium. During the past three years that the moratorium has been in place, the industries at Cherry Point continued to profit and jobs stayed.

What happens if we allow unrefined fuels to flow through our county, increasing the risk to the residents and environment of Whatcom County, and be shipped to other parts of the world? What would keep our current Cherry Point industries from shipping unrefined fuels overseas where labor is cheaper and environmental protections are weaker? One of the responsibilities of the Council is to protect the health and safety of the residents and the environment of Whatcom County. The moratorium has done this without impacting jobs or profitability of the Cherry Point industries. By making sure that unrefined fuels are refined here in Whatcom County, we are preserving Cherry Point jobs.



BELLINGHAM REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



**Whatcom County
Association of REALTORS®**

Also, by requiring conditional use permitting for new projects at Cherry Point, we are ensuring that our Whatcom County residents and environment are protected. Conditional use permits can be obtained and projects can go forward. The current resolution puts in place protection for the health and safety of Whatcom County residents and our environment.

Question #5 Environment: The County is facing a variety of natural resource issues such as WRIA 1 and the Hirst decision on water, agriculture, and the Whatcom County Climate Impact Advisory Committee. What policies do you support and what action steps will be taken to implementation?

Water is our most precious natural resource. This is why I will continue to be a part of the conversations between farmers, tribes, cities, developers, and many other Whatcom County residents. We must reestablish trust and find innovative ways to conserve water so that there is enough water for fish, farms, and people every day of the year.

Currently on the Whatcom County Council, we are evaluating the process of the Planning Unit and how the information that they provide is used in the Council's decision making.

As we go forward, it is our (The Whatcom County Council's) responsibility to listen to the Planning Unit, the farmers, the tribes, the land owners, the developers, and the Whatcom County Climate Impact Advisory Committee to determine the next steps.

Question #6 Tribal Relations: What is effective tribal consultation and what will you do to work cooperatively with local tribes?

Effective relationships begin with establishing trust. To establish trust, we must first listen, acknowledge, apologize, and be asked to work together.

I plan to work toward establishing a Whatcom County Fish Harvesting Goal that former Whatcom County Councilmember and Lummi Indian Business Councilmember, Tim Ballew II, placed on the Council's docket in 2018. Both Nooksack Nation and Lummi Nation have set a goal to reach their fish harvesting goals for the years 1983-1985. During those years, fish were abundant and there were enough for harvesting, wildlife, and for healthy breeding. To get back to these numbers, we need to take care of air, water, and land throughout the entire county. If Whatcom County works toward this goal with Nooksack Nation and Lummi Nation, we will all be in a better position for grant funding that will allow us to move toward a healthy environment where fish can thrive.

Also, when we have a Fish Harvesting Goal, all of us can be working toward a specific goal. Currently, when the Planning Unit is discussing water, there is always a point where each interest group digs in their heels. By focusing on a specific goal, each group can focus on what they can do to contribute toward reaching that goal.

Finally, I will continue to respect and defend the Tribes' Treaty Rights.

David Ramirez; At-Large Position B



BELLINGHAM REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



**Whatcom County
Association of REALTORS®**

Question #1 The Economy : Part A: Whatcom County is facing a variety of economic development issues. Specify your plan to attract, support, and expand a vibrant economy, with emphasis on further development of current businesses and attraction of outside entities that are compatible. Elaborate on plans for commercial and industrial infrastructure expansion, i.e. a place for future jobs.

As a county with a diverse workforce, I believe it is important that we continue to have a focus on the growth in our county.

Current proposed changes to the comprehensive plan and code amendments will create a negative impact to our current heavy industrial businesses and any future development in this area. The county council has silenced the voice of these companies in this area and has decided to push an agenda that will have a long-lasting negative effect in our region. No changes should be made to the comprehensive plan and code amendments until all effective parties are invited to the table to discuss further the possibilities. Regulations are needed but making them sensible not only protects our area but our people that work in these industries as well.

In developing the area, we need to focus on our infrastructure and housing shortage. These two areas are crucial in attracting business to our area like high tech and manufacturing.

The current plan to loop broadband in the county is a great start. We need to have this technology available not only in the cities but also in the rural areas. Technology is advancing quickly, and Whatcom County needs to stay in front of this fast pace industry. The future is high tech based and having manufactures in our area that provide to this industry will bring hundreds of family wage jobs to the area plus support those companies that will provide services. We are in a unique area being next to Vancouver, BC. The cost to operate in BC is high and making Whatcom attractive to companies with locations in BC will give them the option to relocate their business to an affordable operating location nearby. Companies who want to locate their business here are faced with a long drawn out process in receiving permits. What should take weeks takes months. What should take months takes years. Anyone who wants to invest in the area does not want their money tied up in the permitting process. The County needs to have oversight, but it should not unnecessarily slow down growth.

The County needs to have the reputation of fostering growth through sensible regulations and creating a partnership between the local government and our businesses. Together we can bring jobs to Whatcom County which in turn will increase our tax revenue and reduce the tax burden on the individual taxpayer.

Part B: Considering recent retail/restaurant closures, pending layoffs, and a potential recession, what are your plans to ensure a successful environment for our current business community?

Our unemployment rate in Whatcom County is 5.6% with our State being at 4.6%. This is well above our National rate of 3.5%. Whatcom County needs to support our local industries who wish to expand and bring additional jobs to the area. The cost of living in this county has become a factor in the viability in maintaining low wage jobs in the retail and restaurant industry. These companies cannot afford to charge more for their product without driving the consumers elsewhere. If they cannot raise prices, then they



BELLINGHAM REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



**Whatcom County
Association of REALTORS®**

cannot pay their employees enough to afford to live in this county. We cannot be a county of restaurants and retailers. We need to properly balance this with jobs that pay a family wage. This of course is just a part of it. Our housing shortage is a major factor in making it affordable to live here.

Question #2 Housing: Whatcom County is in a housing crisis situation that demands action. In July 2019, the Business & Commerce Advisory Committee recommended a crisis determination and corrective action to the County Council. How will you resolve the housing crisis? (Please elaborate on concepts of housing v. houses, zoning, annexations, land availability, costs, and supply & demand.?)

When it comes to addressing our housing crisis situation, the County Council needs to partner with the organizations that have the knowledge and experience in this area. This is the benefit of listening to the people and not governing based on lack of knowledge. I would resolve the housing crisis by inviting those in construction, real estate (commercial and residential), planning commission, and others with knowledge to sit at the table and come up with a plan that is sustainable.

We do not currently have enough available homes for the current demand. Growth in construction has decreased but our population growth has increased. We need to increase our multi-family and single-family units. Zoning changes need to be considered so these homes can be built closer to where the majority of the jobs are located in our county. We can reduce our carbon footprint by decreasing the distance someone has to commute to their employment. We have some families living out in the rural county to live where they can afford a home. Sometimes this is not by choice but by necessity.

Question #3 Workforce Development; The construction industry is facing a labor shortage that is further complicated by craftspeople nearing retirement age. How will you address workforce development to fill open positions in construction and improve economic opportunities for county residents?

We are losing our future generation of craftspeople to lower cost of living areas. We have many talented young adults who are leaving school looking to advance their careers in the construction industry. First, we need to have growth in our area to bring these types of jobs to Whatcom.

Apprenticeship programs are important in training those who are looking at advancing their knowledge in the trades. We have a great trade school in the area and local union groups that are ready to train the next generation. There needs to be work here to offer up that training. These jobs are taught through hands on skills, not in the classroom.

Question #4 Cherry Point Comprehensive Plan Cherry Point Industrial Zone is home to more than 3,320 jobs with an average wage of \$110,690. Cherry Point businesses pay over \$385 million in local taxes and donate more than \$1 million to youth activities and athletics. What is your view on the proposed Whatcom County Code amendments that address the Comprehensive Plan for Cherry Point Policy 2CC-16 and response to Resolution 2019-004? What actions will you take?

My view of the current proposed comprehensive plan and zoning code amendments is that it is an attempt to regulate the business located in the Cherry Point Industrial zone out of existence. These



BELLINGHAM REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



**Whatcom County
Association of REALTORS®**

code amendments written by an environmental group, not our council, are aimed in regulating an industry which is already heavily regulated by the Federal government.

The County Council is planning on doing something that is not being done elsewhere. The proposed comprehensive plan will make the two refineries unable to continue to make innovative improvements in their processes and to make them safer and more competitive. These corporations will no longer see Whatcom County favorable in doing business and will move their investments elsewhere which will cripple our local economy.

If I am elected to the County Council, I will vote to stop the moratorium and I will bring the industry to the table to discuss what can be done to work on a solution.

The two refineries at Cherry Point were built during a time when the fish canning industry started going away and lumber production was decreasing. The refineries were looked at as heroes in bringing in quality jobs to the area and needed tax revenue. This has been forgotten by many and the oil industry has been vilified and the good they provide has been overlooked. We need to protect the jobs at Cherry Point.

Question #5 Environment: The County is facing a variety of natural resource issues such as WRIA 1 and the Hirst decision on water, agriculture, and the Whatcom County Climate Impact Advisory Committee. What policies do you support and what action steps will be taken to implementation?

The first step I would take is to work on removing the Department of Ecology from making the rules for our area and give back that right to the county. The local government should be the ones to write the Watershed Management Plan. This deadline was missed because there was no direct leadership to drive this locally. I will be the leader to bring in the experts to come up with a plan that works for the residents in Whatcom County, not a bunch of bureaucrats in Olympia.

The Hirst decision is the worst example of urban Washington forcing its priorities on rural Washington. Water conservation in our county has been studied thoroughly but only one side is being heard. I support allowing wells to be drilled in our county to bring development back to our county and help our farmers who need the water to continue the rich agriculture we have here in Whatcom County. I do not support placing monitors on wells to charge its users. This is just another attempt of our local government reaching in our back pockets.

I also do not believe that we are in a climate crisis. This has been a talking point brought on by activists who want to scare us away from using fossil fuels.

As a nation, we have continued to improve the efficiency of our automobiles, manufacturing, and environmental protection methodology. We are the world leaders in this quest and we continue to improve. I believe we all are environmentalist. We all want to breath clean air, drink clean water, and have the pristine areas in our county which we love to recreate in. We need to continue doing our part in being smart in reducing our carbon footprint. We don't need our local government forcing us to do so.



BELLINGHAM REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



Whatcom County
Association of REALTORS®

Question #6 Tribal Relations: What is effective tribal consultation and what will you do to work cooperatively with local tribes?

Tribal consultation with the local tribes must be meaningful, in good faith, and entered into on a government-to-government basis. We must strongly support and respect tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

I believe that we should have someone representing the local tribes during any discussions we have in our county that directly or indirectly affects them. This open dialog will foster trust between the groups and allow us to grow as a community joined in a common goal, not divided.



BELLINGHAM REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE



**Whatcom County
Association of REALTORS®**