

City of Bellingham Candidates

Local citizens, with expertise in relevant issues, provided these questions. *Whatcom Watch* conducted the survey.

Candidates reviewed their statements before printing.

Responses were not edited by *Whatcom Watch*.

Background: The limitations of the standard approach to transportation design have steadily become more apparent with pollution, fatalities, motor vehicle congestion, and costs for both family budgets and city finances rising year after year. An ever-growing number of cities recognize that it's time for a new approach to urban transportation, which allows people to choose from a range of transportation modalities to get around a city safely, efficiently and sustainably. The City Council has significant influence in shaping the future of our transportation system through the annual process of reviewing and approving six-year plans for transportation improvement projects.

Question: What criteria will you prioritize when reviewing projects? And, how will you provide transparency for your review?

Background: For almost a half a century (1972 to present), Western Washington University has not built a dormitory on campus, while increasing enrollment by 50 percent (5,000-plus students) over the same period. WWU continues to house only about 4,000 students on campus, leaving 10,000-plus to compete for rental lodging with local residents, including workers and families. Bellingham is now experiencing a severe rental housing shortage, even as private, market-rate dormitories are becoming the de facto solution. Cost-burdened students are being thrown into privatized dormitory-like housing options controlled by market pricing. The university plans to add another 2,000 students in the next 5-10 years, while adding a marginal 260 dormitory beds on campus by 2021.

Question: What demands are you willing to make on Western Washington University to assist in mitigating the severe rental shortage in Bellingham?

Background: Cities across the United States are being forced to allow wireless providers to install "small cell" transmitters necessary for 5G technology without consideration for the environmental or health impacts from increased wireless radiation exposure levels.

At the July 15, 2019 meeting, the City Council voted to grant Verizon Wireless a franchise agreement to operate and maintain small cell facilities in city rights-of-way. To accommodate the increased densification needed for the operation of 5G frequencies, these "small cell" transmitters will be attached to light poles in front yards, near schools, and public buildings. There are thousands of documented research papers describing harm from wireless radiation exposure.

Question: Will you vote to establish a citizen advisory committee to participate in decision making about the best way forward to make Bellingham a "smart and safe city" — mitigating the risks of health, safety, environmental, security, and privacy threats posed by wireless technology?

Bellingham City Council: At-Large — two-year term



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I will prioritize multimodal transportation above, for example, vehicles which could potentially be single occupancy only, especially those which are powered by fossil fuels. We need more and more frequent mass transit, walkable and rollable sidewalks or pedestrian-only areas, accessible transportation modes, and electric-only vehicles.

As an elected official, all of my research and decisions will be transparent. By law, to the best of my knowledge, this is required.

The action to be taken is to convene a meeting with the university administration to discuss the history of this problem, their enrollment plans (increase or decrease), plans for student housing and environmental and infrastructure impacts. No potential solution is off the table to include impact fees, ordinance requirements for set numbers of units per an agreed upon number of students whether on or off campus, number of homeless students, and what the university and city are providing in the way of services, and public student housing.

This will be an ongoing discussion about near and long-term actions to be taken.

I will vote to establish a citizen oversight committee with investigative and revocation authority to review council and city administration decisions and actions, and the potential and actual environmental impacts including 5G technology.

I will also vote to rescind the franchise agreement for any vendor wanting to implement this technology until, and if, it is can be definitely proven that it is not an environmental hazard.

As for security and privacy threats, a thorough review of all communications media franchised by the city should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity.



Hollie Huthman
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I most often commute by foot and bicycle. For me, the biggest hesitation to do so has often been safety, from adequate lighting, to traffic. Yet, when I do, there's one less car parking downtown. The more we remove the roadblocks to walking/biking/bussing/rolling safely, the more transportation alternatives become accessible to all. I believe we must prioritize multimodal transportation needs, and seek input from our residents, to immediately act on any roadblocks to safety that are easy to solve, and, in the long term, plan our city around people, rather than cars.

A significant increase of on-campus housing could certainly help address our affordable housing crisis. As a WWU student, we were required to live on campus Freshman year. There may be factors that discourage living on campus past this, such as the requirements to purchase a meal-plan, or to vacate student housing seasonally. I would love to see a research partnership between WWU and the city to study the university's impact on Bellingham's housing, what cities of similar circumstance are experiencing, and what WWU might be able to contribute to help combating our housing crisis now and as their enrollment increases.

A "smart and safe city" citizen advisory committee could be a very useful resource for covering a wide range of issues, not just wireless technology. Having a group educated in a range of specializations and fluent in data and research analysis could potentially be helpful to identify problems and add efficiency to directing our resources to action that will most benefit our city. In fact, we have a bevy of such folks at our local colleges and university. I would be in support of discussing the formation of such a committee.

Bellingham City Council: Ward 1 — four-year term

Did not send photo.

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Criteria I will use when prioritizing projects are: 1. Is the design based on current best practices and will it be successful in the context? 2. Will this design solve a problem residents are currently struggling with? 3. Alignment with our community goals and commitment to prioritizing the most vulnerable user, furthering multiple goals. 4. Important connection. 5. Cost effectiveness.

City communications should meet people where they are using modern and accessible communications tools. This means community meetings and Twitter and Instagram and email.

Western has beds for around 30 percent of students, a similar number to other Washington 4-year public universities. I asked Western's president, provost and vice provosts why, and whether Western is considering adding student housing. I don't think it's a primary issue on the radar of university leadership. I think we'll be more successful if we approach student housing as a collaborative partnership between the community and Western rather than leading with demands. Similarly, we could work with Western's leadership to prevent new parking lots on campus and create a micromobility circulation plan.

I would be interested in convening citizens to research the science, economics, impacts and benefits of making sure the people of Bellingham have equal access to high speed internet in their businesses, homes, and schools.



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With respect to transportation improvement projects, our community is embarking on a cultural shift away from gas-powered motor vehicles. This shift requires that a wide range of transportation modalities are available and easily accessible to people of different ages and abilities.

As a council member, one very important role is to engage with the community. True transparency requires that all community members have knowledge of, access to, and earnest engagement in the public process. Engagement requires direct outreach and in-depth conversations with impacted community members and experts in the field to explore solutions and avoid unintended consequences.

I don't believe that demands are the way to achieve an accord. The city of Bellingham and Western Washington University have a shared interest in, and responsibility for our community's success, and I am committed to strengthening this partnership to act in the best interest of our collective community. The current housing crisis will not be rectified unless we develop solutions together.

As a council member, I am committed to sit down face-to-face with impacted community members — leaders at WWU, students, landlords, developers, and neighbors - to identify common ground, opportunities for collaboration, and a path forward.

I support establishment of an advisory group related to wireless technology and development of recommendations regarding the best way for the city of Bellingham to examine vulnerabilities and mitigate risks related to environment, health, safety, security, and privacy.

We also need federal reform. The FCC has exclusive jurisdiction to set Radio Frequency (RF) emissions limits, and federal law currently prohibits the city from setting different local limits and regulating placement of small cell facilities.

As a council member, I have worked to develop the first immigration advisory group, and, as an immigration attorney, I have advocated for federal immigration reform.

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Bellingham City Council: Ward 3 — four-year term



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Public Works and Planning and Community Development staff use scoring systems, public process, and often examples of projects from other communities before they present plans to the Planning Commission and ultimately to the City Council. This provides a fairly vetted process for council to approve all or parts of a transportation plan. Bellingham was one of five out of 281 Washington cities to receive Governor Jay Inslee's 2019 Smart Communities Awards for implementing 111 of the 215 prioritized bicycle infrastructure and crossing improvement projects. Transparency is done through the public process of council meetings, and public written and oral record.

I have worked on housing issues for more than a decade, including leading the first Bellingham Home Fund campaign in 2012. The issue of WWU students living in market housing is a contributing factor to the low vacancy rate. The city of Bellingham does not have statutory or legal authority over a higher educational institution like WWU. However, Whatcom Community College is building new housing for their international students, and I hope Western looks to Whatcom's excellent example of a student housing solution.

I would support a citizen advisory committee on technology, but it's important to remember that the FCC is the regulatory authority over 5G and similar technologies, not the city of Bellingham. The city cannot legally overturn decisions made at the federal level.



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First, I would make sure that an approach to transportation design is supportive of accessibility and inclusivity as well of freedom and safety needs of marginalized communities. I would reach out to tribal nations to enlist their insights on reviewing the environmental impact of the transportation design. I will make sure that no public officials financially benefit from any transportation improvement contracts. This will help bring balance to power-sharing dynamics in our local communities.

The first question came to mind was are we fully aware that the capitalist concept of student debt burden is no longer working? I would work with WWU to mitigate the severe rental shortage in Bellingham by encouraging them to place more attention to the idea of offering distance studies program to save student housing costs, to build more affordable dormitories to meet the incoming students' housing needs, and to consider in offering student cooperative housing and tiny houses on wheels. I would demand that the university pay the rent to the local tribal nations in recognition of settler colonialism.

Yes, I will vote to establish a citizen advisory committee to participate in the decision making about the best way forward to make Bellingham a "smart and safe city" because I fully acknowledge the risks of community wellbeing being destabilized via exposure to small cell towers. I will vote to create a designated areas where 5G small cell towers are not allowed to be installed within the Bellingham vicinity. I will push for the voting decision on the idea of appealing FCC's overreach decisions to permit wireless carriers to install 5G towers near residential areas, schools, playgrounds, and public places.

Bellingham City Council: Ward 5 — four-year term



Lisa Anderson
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Does the project help reduce vehicle traffic, increase transit routes, bikeways, sidewalks, and safety? These are my priorities. I support Bellingham's Multimodal Transportation Concurrency Plan – an award-winning plan. New projects must comply with these standards. An example is the Samish Way corridor for which Public Works was awarded a state DOT grant to redo a one-mile stretch where a "road-diet" will help to slow traffic, reduce vehicle lanes, add bikeways, and treescaping. More public participation in governance is key to transparency; and, toward that goal, I will advocate that Transportation Commission meetings be televised. I am already an engaged citizen.

In a 2018 presentation before the City Council, WWU President Randawa expressed intentions to partner with the city to determine student housing needs along with future increases in Bellingham's general population growth. I was encouraged by his remarks. As a council member, I will recommend establishing a formal process of working with WWU on housing issues, about which we need a clearer picture of the financial capabilities of the university and the state government. Our state is challenged to reduce higher education costs, but our City Council must address the impact WWU has on the limited housing supply for permanent residents.

Yes, I support a citizen advisory committee and want the 5G technology issue addressed by our state leadership to consider a statewide moratorium until we have additional research on health, environmental, and national security concerns. A moratorium on a 5G "rollout" has been called for internationally by scientists. Bellingham needs to listen and advocate. Impacts to our health and environment must be evaluated. Negative impacts on our tree canopy that benefits habitat, cools temperature, and locks up carbon while creating oxygen must not be tolerated. We are a climate in crisis. Let's not become a technology experiment that could have long-term disastrous effects.

The questions were sent to Mr. Suarez via email on September 4. Mr. Suarez replied by email on September 6. He said the questionnaire would be returned with a photo. When the questionnaire was not returned by the deadline, he was sent another email. He didn't reply to their second email.

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