

City of Bellingham Candidates

Editor's Note: Ten races for the Port of Bellingham Commission, Whatcom County Council and Bellingham City Council will appear on the general election ballot. Only the below City Council race with three candidates will appear on the primary ballot.

Candidate responses were not edited by *Whatcom Watch*.

Background:

Lake Whatcom is the drinking water source for Bellingham and surrounding areas, such as Sudden Valley. Many activities – from logging and development, to pesticides and invasive mussels hitching rides on uninspected boats – threaten the quality of our drinking water source. While much attention is devoted to reducing pollution from activities in the watershed, there is the more pressing issue of destructive invasive species, such as zebra or quagga mussels, transported into the lake by boats coming from an infested waterbody like Lake Tahoe. Zebra and quagga mussels can destroy water intake systems, boats, and property. Millions of dollars are spent annually to manage their spread in the Great Lakes and other waterbodies.

Bellingham operates an aquatic invasive species inspection program that requires all boats in the lake to have an inspection permit visible on their vessel. At Bloedel Donovan Park (one of two public launch sites – the other is a primitive launch at the south end of the lake operated by WDFW), inspections occur from late April to the end of September, seven days per week from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. After hours or outside of the inspection season, there is no gate to prohibit the public from launching an uninspected boat.

Question:

Do you support installing a gate at the Bloedel Donovan Park public boat launch? Please answer yes or no and explain. If yes, will you work with city staff and your colleagues on the council to ensure resources are made available for implementation?

Bellingham City Council — At-Large



Tonia Boze

(360) 815-4051
votetoniaboze@gmail.com

In my campaign I have put a special emphasis on public safety which includes water and environment protection.

Education is a key component of preventing contamination. We need to be sure to educate households in the area of how runoff or invasive species contamination could impact their drinking water and lake access. People are creative and they care about their community, so we need to find ways to utilize that enthusiasm.

I would support installing a gate if there was an easy access card, or something similar, available for residents who have had their boats inspected. This would allow access without delay while preserving protection. An access card might require a greater upfront cost, but it would ensure community buy-in and would not punish or place a burden on law abiding citizens or city resources.



Kristina Michele Martens

(360) 920-0682
campaign@electchristina.com

Absolutely, while I believe in residents having access to our lakes and rivers, it's important for all of us to do our part to protect our water from invasive species. Given that we have access to the boat launch seven days per week from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., I believe it's important to provide a gate to help protect Lake Whatcom. As a City Council member I will do everything in my power to work with other local officials to ensure that all resources are made available for the implementation of this and other means to protect our waterways.

Bellingham has led by example in environmental issues including plastic bags, greenways, bike lanes and clean electricity, among other policy issues. But leading by example isn't always enough when it comes to the environment, because our environment is impacted by the actions of people who live outside our city limits just as much as by the people who live inside them.

I will be a City Councilmember who pushes our city to think big and take an active role in county and regional policy discussions, not limited to the environment.



Russ Whidbee

(360) 319-4253
<https://trustruss.org/>

Yes. Invasive species has been a critical issue for years. Absent increased inspections the problem will continue threatening Bellingham's water supply. Without additional resources to address the problem, taxpayers will unfairly be stuck paying the tab for boaters.

As Councilmember, I'll work with staff and colleagues to ensure more resources are made available, and in a manner that doesn't impact other city functions. I'll do so by advocating for user fees and other revenue streams that match sources with uses in addressing invasive species. I'll also work to establish and strengthen critical partnerships with State agencies (e.g., DNR, WDFW, DOE, etcetera) and Whatcom County to ensure that the burden of addressing this issue is not inordinately borne by Bellingham citizens.

Finally, I'll work to address other potential sources of invasive species' introduction. For example, seeking WDFW launch protocols matching those at Bloedel Donovan, and working with state Representatives and Senators, agency personnel and leadership to ensure the issue remains appropriately prioritized and budgeted. Beyond that, I'll also work with the Mayor and City staff to insist that state and federal aviation agencies put practices in place regarding seaplanes landing in Lake Whatcom, addressing an overlooked source of invasive species.