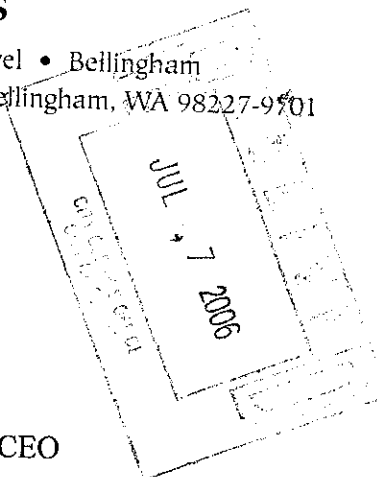




**BELLINGHAM
WHATCOM COUNTY
HOUSING AUTHORITIES**

Office: 208 Unity Street - Lower Level • Bellingham
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 9701 • Bellingham, WA 98227-9701



TO: Mayor Mike Myers
Gary Tomsic
Members of the City Council

FROM: John Harmon, Executive Director/CEO

DATE: July 3, 2006

SUBJECT: Bellingham Herald Editorial

We wanted to share with all of you the attached copy of a July 2, 2006 *Bellingham Herald* editorial. The article is a result of a presentation I made recently to the *Herald's* editorial board. The editorial board was impressed with the scope of our work and our efforts to provide well-kept affordable housing to as many Whatcom County families as possible. This editorial is a fine compliment to the efforts of our Housing Authority team.

I am very proud to be associated with the Bellingham and Whatcom County Housing Authorities. I also feel very fortunate to live and work in Whatcom County with such community-minded and dedicated public officials. Your contributions to supporting our Housing Authority mission make it possible for us to be successful. Thank you for your public service and the spirit of cooperative partnership that makes Whatcom County such a great place and allows it to improve and adapt to new conditions.



www.bellinghamherald.com

OUR VIEW

Sunday, July 2, 2006

Housing authority making progress

There is a lot of talk about skyrocketing housing prices in Whatcom County and a lot of ideas floating around about how to close the disparity between wages and home prices and rental costs.

One agency is doing something about it.

The Bellingham Whatcom Housing Authority is working at a rapid pace to provide housing for those people in our community who can least afford it.

The agency currently provides housing or vouchers to help pay for housing to more than 3,200 people in Whatcom County. It owns several apartment complexes and buildings, mostly in Bellingham. Still, the waiting lists at the authority are full of low-income people, more than 3,000 people, most of them working poor, who need a place to live at a price they can afford.

The authority is taking on that daunting task as quickly as financial prudence allows.

CONSTRUCTION BOOM

Under construction now is Laurel Village, a 50-unit complex located at Laurel Street along the trail that comes off of Railroad Avenue. That development is part of an ongoing boom in housing construction in downtown Bellingham.

Also downtown the agency will soon begin remodeling the historic Hotel Laube on State Street, creating 20 more units, and is working on preliminary plans and financing for 100 units at the old Walton Beverage site at the corner of State and Magnolia streets.

In north Bellingham the agency plans 75 units in a development called Meadow Wood near Bakerview Road and Northwest Avenue.

The growth spurt is being helped along by changes in funding for low-income housing in the 1990s. Now, instead of relying on the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, most projects are funded by private developers and investors who receive tax credits for investing in public housing.

FIGHTING STEREOTYPES

Public housing suffers from a negative image nationwide, fed by the harsh realities of projects in big cities such as Chicago, Detroit, New York and Washington, D.C. When some people think of public housing they immediately associate it with the crime, gang activity and disrepair seen in some projects in those bigger cities.

But our housing authority officials work tirelessly to create facilities where residents can feel proud to live. Housing authority facilities here are generally indistinguishable from privately operated apartment complexes. There are housing authority facilities in six of Whatcom County's seven cities, and some in the county, yet few people who don't work at the housing authority could tell you where they are.

Officials say that is one purpose. The housing authority wants to create homes for people free from stereotyping. Their residents are generally hard-working citizens or disabled or the elderly. The agency has a zero tolerance for crime or drug use. Graffiti is removed from facilities as soon as it appears. The agency runs criminal background checks on all would-be residents and, in Bellingham, it provides money to the Police Department to pay most of the salary of an officer who works as a liaison to housing authority properties.

A PRESSING NEED

The agency's biggest issue in Whatcom County is the growing need to provide more tax-supported housing.

Our current economic boom in the county is largely based on real estate and construction. For anyone who owns his or her home already, that can be a good thing. If you bought a starter home in the 1990s for \$125,000 in Bellingham, you can probably sell it now for more than twice that. But if you never had a job that provided you the income to buy that home in the 1990s or if you moved here more recently and are working a low- or average-wage job, the idea of owning a home is daunting if not impossible. Even rents can be way too much for someone working a minimum wage job to afford.

We're lucky to have such a well-run housing authority in our community to help fill that gap. The people who run the agency are aggressively trying to answer a dire need in Whatcom County. We salute them for the hard work they are doing and encourage Whatcom County governments and citizens to do what they can to support those efforts.



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CC 7/10/06

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July 7, 2005

VIA FACSIMILE ONLY

City Council Members
City of Blaine

RE: Seascape Resolution Meeting

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I respectfully request an immediate meeting with three members of the Blaine City Council to discuss the substantial issues relating to the Seascape project. Such group of council members would not form a quorum, and at the same time would allow the responsible officials to be aware of our participation, ongoing problems, and attempts to resolve any outstanding issues. Thank you.

Sincerely,


Joel Douglas
Harbor Lands Co.

cc: Clerk of City Council, City of Blaine

SEASCAPE PROJECT
JULY 7, 2006 - PAGE 1 OF 1

Approved By
Harbor Lands Co.

JUL 06 2006

360-734-8191

By