

whatcom Independent

www.whatcomindy.com Your reliable, independent news for Whatcom County.

ISSUE 137

July 6-12, 2006

FREE EVERY THURSDAY

Meet the man who's planning your future

■ *Comes to Bellingham from Shoreline via Ethiopia*

by **SARA L. GEBALLE**
sara@whatcomindy.com

BELLINGHAM - As U.S. House Speaker Tip O'Neill used to say, "All politics is local." Tim Stewart, Bellingham's new Planning & City Development Director, has slightly tweaked Tip's famous phrase into his own mantra - "All planning is local."

What he means, Stewart said, is two types of knowledge are needed for successful city planning - one is the technical knowledge planners provide; the second is the local community's knowledge of its values. "The best planning process is when the two types interact, and the community teaches the planner about the community," he explained.

In Stewart's view, the planning director's job has three main parts: 1) "educate the public about what the law is," 2) help people recognize they have the ability to change the law "if we don't like how it's working," and 3) find outcomes "multiple groups can live with" when community groups have values that conflict. "Debate is good and healthy," he maintained.

As Stewart embarks on a new job that some might term "thankless" because he is bound to make enemies no matter what he does or doesn't do, he was careful to say, "I don't want to raise expectations that can't be fulfilled." For instance, he cautioned, "A devel-

see **STEWART** page 3

Tim Stewart, Bellingham's new planning director, replaced Jorge Vega in May.
photo by Sarah Geballe

Elephants seen grazing in Lynden

■ *Did you think you were hallucinating?*

by **HELEN SOLEM**
helen@whatcomindy.com

LYNDEN - The circus comes to town. But before the circus come the animals. That's why three elephants can now be seen grazing in a quiet meadow outside Lynden. Wanda, aged 56, Patti, aged 34, and Tica, aged 25, patiently await their chance to perform in Circus Gatti. The pachyderm trio is composed entirely of Asian elephants that each do different circus tricks: Wanda walks on two feet, Tica does a headstand, and Patti stands on a barrel and rolls it. "The barrel is broken. Maybe Patti needs to go on a diet," said Ziggy, floor manager for Circus Gatti. Ziggy grew up with elephants in Europe where he was an acrobat for 20 years and his uncle managed a circus. ■WI

Elephants try to "blend" into dairy herd in Lynden pasture.

photo by Helen Solem

NEWS AT A GLANCE

Photo by Marilyn Olsen

BELLINGHAM - Last weekend, at least one Uncle Sam found the soft, green grass in Boulevard Park simply irresistible. He was caught napping by a WI roving reporter, perhaps already reserving a primo spot for Tuesday night's fireworks.

Neighbors are "spit"-ing mad

BLAINE - Since December 2004, when Trilium Corporation floated the idea of putting a 70+ unit subdivision on Semiahmoo Spit, a lot of residents of Blaine, and folks who like to hike the spit the way it is, have been less than enthusiastic about the development. Planners sent the first design back to the drawing board. This week, residents will have a chance to comment on the revision. See p. 3 for details.

Photo by Marilyn Olsen

Bar-B-Que, brew and a movie, too

BELLINGHAM - Lights! Camera! Action! It's movie time at Boundary Bay's beer garden Thursday nights through August. Film buffs can come early, eat, listen to music and stay until the very last frame of an all-star favorite flick. What's on the marquee? See p. 19.

Train leaves earlier, comes home later. All aboard!

BELLINGHAM - Taking the train to Seattle and back in just one day used to make the schedule just a bit tight for all but the most ambitious speed shoppers. Now, thanks to Amtrak's new schedule, visitors can leave earlier, come home later, and maybe even have time for a leisurely lunch. Plus, there'll be more trains from Seattle to Portland. For all the new times, see p. 2.

What's between a rock and a hard place?

BELLINGHAM - In the case of the Palmgren family it turned out to be a reef and lots of cool habitat for clams, fish and frogs, not to mention a whole lot better view of the beach. Find out how they re-discovered their waterfront on p. 5.

whatcom
Independent

FOLLOW THE FOOTPRINTS TO THE DOWNTOWN GALLERY WALK ON FRIDAY

The China Communique

Chinese university students - some ideas and opinions - Part 2

by **LARRY KLEPINGER**
larry@larryklepinger.com

Earlier this year, 2004 Congressional Candidate Larry Klepinger moved to Fujian province in China and accepted a teaching position offer at Fuzhou University. The WI has invited him to write a series of articles communicating what is really happening in China— through the eyes of a casual observer – without the major media spin. You can contact Larry via email at larry@larryklepinger.com. Or visit his website www.larryklepinger.com for more information

CHINESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS – SOME IDEAS AND OPINIONS —Part 2

RECAP: A colleague suggested that I take a poll of my students and print my findings in this article. It sounded like an interesting idea, so I set up some questions, trying to keep them as direct as possible in hopes of getting candid responses in return.

Test parameters: participants were first year university students, male 51 percent, female 49 percent, 101 individuals, 17 to 20 years old, and totally anonymous (no names or student numbers).

The test was written with 10 general questions in both fill-in and multiple-choice format.

In my previous article, I discussed questions 1 through 5. This article covers the findings from questions 6 through 10.

Question 6 through 10

6. If you could talk to one famous person in history who would it be?

- Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-Tung) – 15
- Zhou En Lai – 14
- Deng Xiao Ping – 11

No big surprise here. But what follows came as an unexpected – yet welcome – relief. Abraham Lincoln, 6; Albert Einstein, 6; Bill Gates, 5; and George Bush, 3. Some other notables that received honorable mention; Karl Benz, Kobe Bryant, Princess Di, Tracy MacGregor, Salvador Dali, Julius Caesar and, yes, one student even wanted to talk to Bill Clinton.

As an interesting sidenote, the students like to pick their own English names – sometimes very creative – so as to get the “feeling” of being in a Western environment. First, the girls: Aloe, Amor, Bear, Cherry, Cooky, Elvis, Erinyes, Fly, Honey, Jalinsa, Will, Seven, Strawberry, and Zoe. Now for the guys: Baba, Bibby, Bubble, Cruise, Iron, Krebs, Motley, Rhonio, Tiger, Till, Titan, and Willim. Yes, those are the names they chose for themselves – and the correct spellings. I’ll leave the reader to figure out where their inspiration came from.

7. If you had only one thing to wish for, what would it be?

- Family Well-being – 38
- Money/Success – 23
- Personal Happiness – 18
- World Peace – 7
- More Personal Freedom – 2

These five answers comprised approximately 89 percent of the respondents’ choices. One other person said he wanted to be handsome, while another replied that she wanted to be smarter. The two that were the most poignant were, “To have a father” and “To keep my grandparents forever.”

As you can see, the highest number was for family well-being, which coincides with the answers given in an earlier article as to how much the students care about their family members. I wonder if America can make the same claim?

8. What do you think is the biggest problem in the world today?

- War/Peace – 36
- The Environment – 18
- Economic Gap/Rich and Poor – 17
- Natural Resources/Energy – 9
- World Population – 6
- Food/Water – 2

These six answers made up approximately 88 percent of the responses. Quite frankly, I was surprised at how well they broadened their perspective on this question. However, what tends to be lacking is any concept regarding human rights or the idea of democracy in general. When I speak to my students, they have a smattering as to the basic tenants of freedom – but they don’t seem to be able to relate to it in any concrete manner. Hopefully, this will become more apparent once their economic status improves – but I sometimes wonder if this will really be the case.

9. What do you want to do when you graduate from this university?

- Get a Job – 29
- Study Abroad – 20
- Travel Abroad – 16
- I Don’t Know – 5

These four responses comprised approximately 70 percent of the answers. Yet, more specific answers were also registered. For girls: be a successful female, businesswoman, veterinarian, lawyer, university professor, European designer and one to get married. For boys: become a boss, engineer, psychologist, accountant, international businessman, and one to make world peace.

I found it interesting that only one girl wanted to get married. Also, notice that no one said they wished to enter politics or any type of governmental service. Not one person wanted to join the military. And please take note of the total number that want to travel/study abroad, 36 students. This seems to indicate an underlying current of dissatisfaction with the education and/or living standards in China.

10. Are you saving any money now for your future retirement?

- Yes – 51
- No – 45

Five students chose not to answer this question. Here I thought the results would be much different. I have always heard about how much Chinese people save from an early age, but that doesn’t seem to be the case. Although about 60 percent of the students are from “well-off” families, they still don’t seem to be all that interested in the traditional value of saving money. In fact, many of my students are excited about getting their first credit card, the sales pitch on the most recent advertisement being, “The more you buy, the more you get.”

I pity China if it succumbs to the debt-ridden mentality of average Americans. Then again, I suppose that is why American credit card companies can’t wait to get into China and convince 1.3 billion people that saving money is a bad idea.

Until next time, “zaijian” from China. =WI

Stewart

from page 6

residents by 2022. “How do we accommodate population targets?” he asked. “Do we grow out, or up, or in? Do we grow at all?”

Stewart pointed to Kirkland, WA, where city leadership has decided once the current 20-year planning term is over in 2022, they simply will refuse to grow further. When asked what will happen when Kirkland says it’s full-up and won’t build more, Stewart replied, “We don’t know; it’s uncharted waters.” But he suggested, “That doesn’t mean it isn’t something Bellingham can’t try as well.”

“Bellingham has an opportunity to become a growth leader because

the right questions are being asked and people are taking them seriously and looking for answers,” Stewart ventured. One way to “grow smart,” he suggested, is to “selectively find those areas appropriate for redevelopment.” In any given neighborhood, 95 percent might be good, strong and thriving. “But there are nooks and crannies that are challenges.” Within that five percent, Stewart proposed, “there are ways to add value (by redeveloping) instead of taking value.”

After a short time in his new job, Stewart carefully said, “I’m still assessing and still listening... There are still a lot of things I need to learn about the Bellingham community.” =WI

CANDID TAKES FROM TIM STEWART

On traffic congestion: “Connect dense places with good transportation,” Stewart says. In Seattle, he adds, “there are places where people prefer to bus or bike because it is cheaper, more efficient and quicker.” He cites the BART system in the Bay Area as a good example. He sees mass transit as the way to minimize the impact of traffic on neighborhoods. (Stewart lives in Bellingham’s Central Business District and walks to work.)

On neighborhood vs. citywide planning: “I like neighborhood plans... Local neighborhoods should influence planning regulations as long as they are consistent with a city plan.”

On the new comprehensive plan awaiting City Council approval: “I really need more time to look at it.”

On the Growth Management Act (GMA): “Personally, I think the GMA in Washington has a fatal flaw. The 20-year planning horizon is way too short.” Rather, Stewart says, we should have at least a 100-year vision “and be thinking long term when we make our development decisions... The really tough question is what do we want to become eventually?”

On annexation: “If the city is already providing services, it makes a lot of sense for those areas to be part of the city... There needs to be vigorous criteria for property owners to petition for annexation.”

On the planner/developer relationship: “It is not possible to fairly describe a typical relationship between a planner and a developer any more than it would be fair to describe a typical relationship between a husband and a wife... Many developers think that planners are too cozy with the neighbors, and many neighbors think the planners are way too friendly with developers. At the end of the day, I believe the best type of relationship between a planner and those involved in the planning process would be a professional relationship.”

On ideas for improving community/developer dialog: “It is important that our processes are transparent and that we are all practicing the art of the possible in a world that has many constraints... My basic approach to improved communications will be to encourage and facilitate mutual respect, respectful candor, and trust.”

49th Unparallel

by ben mann



“When I was your age, a city park wasn’t a public phone booth!”