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FEB 23 2012

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Planning

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Mr. Jeff Thomas, Planning Director
City of Bellingham
210 Lottie Street
Bellingham, WA 98225

February 21, 2012

Dear Mr. Thomas:

**Re: DRAFT FAIRHAVEN URBAN VILLAGE PLAN COMMENTS FROM
GENE AND CONNIE SHANNON, AND FAIRHAVEN VILLAGE INN**

In response to the City's invitation for comment on the staff draft Fairhaven Urban Village Plan (UVP) published December 21, 2011, I am speaking tonight on behalf of Gene and Connie Shannon, owners of the Fairhaven Village Inn at 1200 10th Street, Bellingham, and an adjoining undeveloped commercial parcel at the northwest corner of 10th and Mill Ave in historic Fairhaven.

The Shannon's own and operate the Fairhaven Village Inn, a prime visitor destination in Fairhaven. Guests enjoy a relaxed stay in modern rooms located in a vibrant historic district. Like other Fairhaven customers, Village Inn guests relish the quality urban environment, great restaurants and shops, and the close proximity to Bellingham Bay. A new Fairhaven Village UVP should embrace this economic success and provide a vision that goes beyond current conditions. The proposed UVP should provide a positive path for investment to keep Fairhaven vibrant; however the current draft establishes hurdles and tedious regulations that constrict economic activity.

The Shannon's support adopting a new Fairhaven UVP that:

- defines Fairhaven as a Tier 1 Urban Village;
- is developed according to professional planning and engineering standards;
- complies with the City Comprehensive Plan and the goals of the State Growth Management Act;
- is internally consistent; and
- encourages investment and stewardship for a vibrant Fairhaven.

The staff draft needs to be improved in many areas which we will address in future public hearings. Specific suggestions for now are:

- A. The Shannon's undeveloped property at 10th and Mill is a prime location for commercial or mixed uses. They support a broad mix of commercial and residential uses in the Fairhaven Commercial Core. Their site has great amenity looking over the Port property and Bellingham Bay. Building heights allowed on the Shannon site should be equal to heights adopted for smaller urban villages in Fountain District and Samish Way, locations meant to emulate Fairhaven.

*Comment Letter on behalf of Gene & Connie Shannon
To the City of Bellingham regarding the
Staff December 2011 Draft Fairhaven UVP*

- B. The current staff parking proposal is incomplete. The Shannon's undeveloped property at the northwest corner of 10th and Mill is in the current Parking District and payment was made from their parcel into the Parking District improvements. Therefore, the Shannon's site is entitled to the parking relief adopted by the City Council. The site can then be developed with the parking waiver afforded other parcels belonging to the Parking District. The UVP should include specific language to continue the Parking District benefits, and provide policies to expand its use throughout the Fairhaven Core.
- C. The Shannon's site will likely be developed in response to market conditions in the future. We note the City website includes the KPFF Consulting Engineers' technical appendix (August 2011) to the Transpo parking study (October 2011). KPFF proposed the Shannon property and adjoining Port property as a multi-story parking structure. The Shannon property is not for sale to be a parking garage. However, Port property is publically owned and could be used for parking by staying under the 35' height limit specified by Shoreline Management regulations. Fairhaven's economic vitality is directly tied to parking solutions, and the current staff draft plan does not provide solutions. Property owners and merchants must be brought into this discussion.
- D. The proposed Design Guidelines should be changed to provide a proscriptive design palette so that projects can be approved administratively instead of being held hostage for numerous discretionary permits. We support good design guidelines drafted to meet a properly defined vision for Fairhaven as a vibrant urban village. Projects compliant with those adopted standards should be provided an incentive to move forward. Unfortunately, the staff proposed design guidelines do not meet this goal and should be substantially revised.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. The Shannon's and Fairhaven Village Inn should remain designated as a Party of Record as the City continues its work on the Fairhaven Urban Village Plan. Their mailing address is 1200 10th Street, Bellingham, WA 98225. We look forward to reviewing a more complete staff draft soon.

On behalf of Gene and Connie Shannon, and the Fairhaven Village Inn,



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Cc: Bellingham Planning Commission
Mayor Kelli Linville
Gene and Connie Shannon