

## Bowker, Kristina J.

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**From:** Dearborn, Amy C.  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 11, 2024 5:35 PM  
**To:** Bowker, Kristina J.; Sundin, Steven C.  
**Subject:** Fw: Hearing tonight re: 2303 Alabama  
**Attachments:** creek easment waiver.odt; letter 01.31.24.odt

Amy Dearborn  
Environmental Planner II  
City of Bellingham Planning and Community Development  
210 Lottie Street, Bellingham, WA  
360-778-8356

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**From:** Eydie Carlson <[eydiecarlson@gmail.com](mailto:eydiecarlson@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 11, 2024 3:48 PM  
**To:** Dearborn, Amy C. <[acdearborn@cob.org](mailto:acdearborn@cob.org)>  
**Subject:** Hearing tonight re: 2303 Alabama

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Amy,

I am attaching comments for tonight's hearing regarding the waiver of the creek easement at 2303 Alabama Street.

I am also attaching, for reference, a letter I wrote to my city council member *but never sent* because I had a good conversation and working relationship with Eddie. I believe I still do. This is not personal.

Please confirm you can open these attachments.

If you would rather they come in as the body of this email please let me know right away.

Regards,  
Eydie Carlson

E. Carlson  
2300 Alabama Street  
Bellingham, WA 98229

City of Bellingham  
210 Lottie Street  
Bellingham, WA 98225

December 11, 2024

Hearing Examiner,

I am writing in reference to the proposed development project at 2302 Alabama Street and the application for a waiver of the 75 foot creek easement. I have several concerns regarding this project and this waiver.

I would ask, before the Hearing Examiner makes a decision, that they come out physically and view this property with an eye towards the concerns noted herein. I would be happy to show them any specifically denoted items.

#### Flora and Fauna

This property has been vacant for over a decade. In this time local wildlife has made a home of this property and there are many native species who make use of this green space. The wildlife depends on creek access and creek purity as it serves as drinking water and a cooling space. There are currently several hideaways where the deer feel secure enough to park their young when they go off to forage for food. There are a multitude of bird species who fly through and spend time on the property as well as raccoon, squirrels, rodents and numerous insect species. Development of this property will significantly reduce the biodiversity of this area and be detrimental to these many species who call it home.

Additionally, many species of trees, brush, grasses and other plants have rejuvenated. All of these species are necessary for the local wildlife and for a more enjoyable Bellingham.

#### Remediation

On this property there is an old tar driveway and an old septic tank. These should be remediated respecting environmental regulations and extra care for the health of the creek.

#### Greenways Levy

Since 1990 voters have approved, continuously, a Greenways Levy which includes plans for wildlife habitat hubs and patches. The Greenways Levy specifically calls for the city to invest in Community Gardens – this has long been a dream of myself and my neighbors for this property.

In this part of Bellingham there is very little park or green space. This area, because it has been historically populated by renters, has been neglected in this respect.

This property, while almost too small to build on, is a substantial wildlife hub. This property is

bordered by Fever Creek on two sides and would qualify for the city mandate of a protected wildlife area.

### Fever Creek Restoration

Fever Creek itself is a high risk waterway in the Whatcom Creek Watershed. There was substantial restoration after the 1999 pipeline explosion and Washington State Department of Ecology currently has Whatcom Creek, with Fever Creek specifically noted, as a waterway of concern for high levels of bacteria.

It is much easier to prevent damage than to restore to health after the damage has occurred. Our waterways are too important to make decisions based solely on what is good for profit making. Our city would be in a better financial place if historical considerations for financial growth took a long eye towards the cost of the potential for future damage and the cost of clean up.

### Storm-water Runoff

The storm-water runoff is of great concern.

This year we had substantial flooding when the freak rainstorm hit in October. Granted, this was a record amount of rain. However, the Climate Emergency indicates that we will see more storms of this magnitude and storm-water runoff will continue to increase and water flows will continue to be unpredictable and substantive.

Any amount of new construction, where concrete and pavement are poured, changes storm-water drainage and *all water runs downhill*. The massive amount of development near Barkley may have contributed to the river running through my property in October.

My concerns with waiving the creek easement for development of 2302 Alabama are related to the increase in flooding that this might cause on my property. My property is located immediately west of 2302 and the portion where my home is located is at a slight degree downhill from it. If there is a substantial amount of concrete poured, or pavement laid, this will change the stormwater runoff and increase the risk of flooding for my home.

Will the developer be required to add a storm-water drainage system?

### Erosion

With an increase in storm-water runoff erosion of my property by Fever Creek will increase. There has already been a massive amount of erosion on the north side of the creek of my property. My concerns with changing the water flow is that it will also increase this erosion.

The property at 2302 has a substantial degree incline approximately half way from the street to the creek. How much of this incline is due to erosion is unknown to me but I suspect that a large footprint of concrete and pavement on this parcel will lead to greater incline, including on my property.

I do not know if the developer will be required to put in a retaining wall or if a retaining wall will be worse for the environment and the wildlife. I suspect that it cannot be a benefit to the wildlife. If a

retaining wall is only added to the property line and not continued behind my property, all the way to the culvert, then this could increase the erosion on my property.

### Culvert

It is my understanding that before the new culvert was installed under Xenia Street, behind my property, that there was constant flooding of the street and the homes to the west of me.

During the freak storm in October the water was above the retaining wall on the south side of the creek leaving only about a foot to the top of the culvert. This was after it became light out and the water behind my back door had drained. (At 5 am there was a river of water coming into my yard and it was about 8 inches high outside my back door.) I do not know if it reached the top of the culvert at its peak.

I am concerned that the storm-water runoff increase will also affect the effectiveness of the culvert and that we will once again see flooding of Xenia.

### Parking

This proposed development was initially for 2 units, then I was told 3 units, now I am told this hearing is simply for the box of 1400 square feet. If this is approved for a single family home or any combination of units fitting this 1400 foot box will greatly change the parking situation.

This property opens to Alabama – a one way street at its entrance and exit. This will require the ability of vehicles to turn around on the property which also increases the threat to the wildlife and the critical area.

Increased numbers of vehicles increase the risk of oil leaks and other toxic chemicals directly into the creek.

Additionally, if the developer builds a multi unit project there is a chance that I will have vehicles parked all along my property on Xenia. This should be taken into consideration when approving the number of units and the parking.

### Trees

There are three large trees that belong to the City of Bellingham on this proposed development site. Two Douglas Firs and a cherry tree. One of the Douglas Firs is dead and should be removed as soon as possible. We have reported this dead tree to the city multiple times and about 6 weeks ago it had a major failure where the top flew off during a windstorm. Luckily the 25 foot top flew across Alabama, missed all the power lines, the street, the neighbors home and just landed in their yard. This could have been catastrophic if the tree fell into the street, the power-lines or any of our homes.

With the proposed setback waiver changing from 15 feet to 5 feet will the developer now be responsible for these trees or will they still belong, along with their maintenance, to the city of Bellingham?

On the back of the property, on the creek bed, sits a massive apple tree. I estimate it is at least one hundred years old. This tree provides fruit and shelter to the wildlife and also helps with management of the water tables. Will this tree be preserved?

### Other Environmental Waivers

I understand that this hearing is only for the waiver of the creek easement. I am concerned that once this waiver is received more environmental codes and regulations will also be sought to be waived.

### Sewer Hook Up

It is my understanding that sewer hook up will need to go through my front yard. What care will be exercised to preserve my trees and shrubs and to restore my front yard after the construction?

### New Owners/Renters

Once the developer builds the proposed structure there is no guarantee that future owners or renters will respect the necessary care to the environment or to the creek.

To be clear, I like Edwin Goodsir. I have met him and spoken to him at length regarding this property. I am attaching a letter that I wrote on 01/31/24 to my city council member regarding this property, *but never sent*, because I subsequently met Eddie and he assured me that he shared my environmental concerns and would respect the environmental codes, including the creek easement. This is not personal.

I am simply a resident, homeowner, voter and citizen of the City of Bellingham and wish to protect the beauty and environment that makes so many of us wish to live here and be part of this community.

I will appreciate being informed on the status of this requested waiver and all other actions regarding this proposed development.

Regards,

E. Carlson  
2300 Alabama Street

E. Carlson  
2300 Alabama Street  
Bellingham, WA 98229

City of Bellingham  
210 Lottie Street  
Bellingham, WA 98225

Edwin H. "Skip" Williams,

We are writing in reference to potential development of vacant property located in ward 4. The address is 2302 Alabama Street, tax parcel number 66187. This property has been vacant for many years and recently was foreclosed and was owned by Fannie Mae. It was sold to a developer on January 14, 2024. I do not know who the current owner of the property is.

I have long assumed that this property is not build-able as it is bordered on two sides by Fever Creek and there is a 75 foot creek easement.

This property is a wildlife corridor and refuge should be preserved as green space. I have long hoped the city would turn it into a community park or a community garden – as have my neighbors,

Recent surveying activity indicates that the new owner intends to build. I am not certain of the feasibility of building on this property due to the creek easement. Although I am a proponent of increased and affordable housing, this property does not make sense to build on as the value to the city and the environment and the animals that use this property exceeds the value that a very small home would provide to our housing needs.

If this property must be allowed to be developed we have some requests when considering this project. It is far easier to prevent damage to the land and creek than it will be to clean it up in the future.

- No waiver be allowed for the 75 foot creek easement.
- Access to the creek, for the deer and other animals be maintained.
- All native and established healthy trees be preserved. Specifically the ancient apple tree that sits on the creek bed.
- Extreme care be used in remediating the old septic system that sits on the property.
- Extreme care be used in remediating the old tar driveway that sits on the property
- No other environmental codes be waived.

Even if this property is developed following all codes and all environmental regulations my concern is that the buyers of the home, or the renters, will not exercise the same care in preserving the property for animal access or take care to ensure the creek is not harmed.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a response.

Regards,

E. Carlson

## Bowker, Kristina J.

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**From:** Dearborn, Amy C.  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 11, 2024 5:36 PM  
**To:** Bowker, Kristina J.; Sundin, Steven C.  
**Subject:** Fw: Public comment on 2302 Alabama Project

Amy Dearborn  
Environmental Planner II  
City of Bellingham Planning and Community Development  
210 Lottie Street, Bellingham, WA  
360-778-8356

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eTRAKIT portal: <https://permits.cob.org/etrakit> 24/7.

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**From:** Cara Wietstock <carawietstock@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 11, 2024 4:13 PM  
**To:** Dearborn, Amy C. <acdearborn@cob.org>  
**Subject:** Public comment on 2302 Alabama Project

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Hi there,

Thank you for accepting public comments on the 2302 Alabama Project proposal to reduce the Fever Creek stream buffer.

I own a home on the next block from 2302 Alabama and greatly oppose the reduction of this buffer. These buffers were set in place for a reason, and protecting the wildlife left in the area is of the utmost importance to me and to many of my neighbors. Please do not grant this reduction.

Happy Trails,  
Cara Wietstock  
[carawietstock@gmail.com](mailto:carawietstock@gmail.com)