

# Edmonds Beacon

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## Council to citizens: We hear you on the connector



Beacon photos by Brian Soergel

Hundreds gathered in Edmonds for a rally against a proposed bridge from Sunset Avenue down to Brackett's Landing North. For more photos, go to Edmonds Beacon's Facebook page.

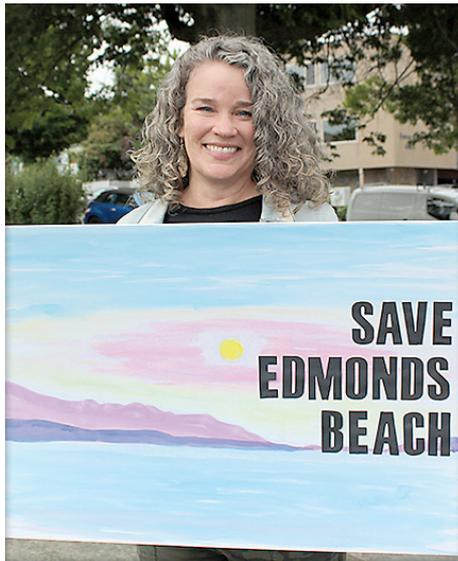
### Council vote defeats controversial bridge to Brackett's Landing North

BY BRIAN SOERGER EDMONDSEDITOR@YOURBEACON.NET

In a victory for those who want to keep a sparsely used beach in Edmonds just the way it is – it doesn't even have an official name – the City Council voted Tuesday not to proceed with the next phase of the Edmonds Street Waterfront Connector.

It was assumed by many that Councilmember Kristiana Johnson would be the swing vote for phase 2, which would authorize Mayor Dave Earling to give consultant Parametrix the OK to proceed with a \$2.35 million design, permitting, and collecting of environment documents.

Nope. It turns out that the swing vote was councilmember and mayoral candidate Neil Tibbott, who previously indicated he was in support of the \$27.5 million, single-lane vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle bridge – extending from Edmonds Street and Sunset Avenue to Brackett's Landing North – that would



Beth Sanger, owner of Ombu Salon + Spa, made a sign for the rally.

expedite fire and emergency access to the east side of the railroad tracks from the west side in the event the tracks were blocked by stalled trains or

police activity. With chants of "Save our beach!" frequently drowning him out – and a chamber full of connector opponents looking on – Public Works Director Phil Williams rehashed the history of the connector, which included a 14-month study from citizens and public officials, four in-person and online public meetings, and an investigation of 51 alternatives.

There were also briefings with business owners, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Ecology, and BNSF, as well as six meetings with tribal governments, among others.

After councilmembers discussed the project – some citing environmental and aesthetic concerns while others stressed the importance of beach access in the face of future train and ferry traffic – councilmember and mayoral candidate Mike Nelson made a motion to halt Earling's OK of the next steps.

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### Cam Tripp: The force behind dismantling the connector

BY BRIAN SOERGER EDMONDSEDITOR@YOURBEACON.NET

At an Edmonds City Council committee meeting June 11, where the public was invited but not allowed to speak, as per rules, Public Works Director Phil Williams responded to a question from Councilmember Dave Teitzel concerning citizens opposed to the Edmonds Street Waterfront Connector.

More specifically, the questions centered on a change.org group called "Save Edmonds Beach" that has collected more than 8,000 signatures – in just the past month – opposing the planned

structure. "I don't know if there's any way that we really can tell whether those people are from Edmonds, Shoreline, Everett, or Florida," Williams said. "It's a little obtuse that way, from my perspective."

One thing, though: The creator of that group, Edmonds resident Cam Tripp, was at the meeting. "I'm like, I'm right here," Tripp said Friday, June 14, during an interview along the beach at Brackett's Landing North.

City officials may not know Tripp from Adam, but the 47-year-old is a minor celebrity/

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Cam Tripp holds the mic up to Native speakers and performers Paula Bond and Paul Wagner.

### Mayoral and council candidates speak out on Waterfront Connector

BY BRIAN SOERGER EDMONDSEDITOR@YOURBEACON.NET

In advance of this week's City Council meeting, where councilmembers rejected the Edmonds Street Connector, the Beacon posed a question to the eight candidates running for council and four for mayor.

It asked: "Are you for the connector in its current iteration?"

The council candidates are Diane Buckshnis, Jenna Nand, Alicia Crank, Vivian Olson, Susan Paine, Diana White, Laura Johnson, and Nathan Monroe.

The mayoral candidates are Mike Nelson, Neil Tibbott, Kristiana Johnson, and Brad Shipley.

All replied except for Johnson, who did support the connector on Tuesday.

Here are the comments the Beacon received:

#### Mike Nelson, mayoral candidate

"I do not support the connector and will vote against continued funding. The main reason I voted against the connector is because we have more urgent public safety issues throughout our city.

"We should have reliable emergency access to the other side of the tracks, but the very costly connector is not the answer.

"I am also deeply concerned about the potential environmental harm to the Brackett's Landing Shoreline Sanctuary.

"Let's re-evaluate more affordable solutions that do not harm our beaches and our waterfront."

#### Brad Shipley, mayoral candidate

"Edmonds waterfront is a complicated dance between ferries, cars, buses, freight trains, and pedestrian beachgoers. Each have their own needs for access, and they are often at conflict with each other. I do not deny the value of looking into solutions to improve access to the waterfront to reduce these conflicts.

"In 2015, the City attempted just that. Mayor Earling appointed a task force that included representatives from four major transportation agencies (BNSF, WSDOT – Ferries Division, Community Transit, and Sound Transit), three Edmonds residents, and co-chairs Councilmember Mike Nelson and Port of Edmonds Commissioner Jim Orvis.

"Public Works, City engineers, and members of the consultant team were also present.

"Noticeably, representation from the Parks Department or City of Edmonds Planning Division were not included in the task force. Either of which may have paused to consider the human experience. Too often, city government finds itself operating in functional silos. This has to change.

"There was good intent from both the task force and City Council. Discussion was had about how to properly engage the public and which visual impacts they felt the community would not be amenable to. Neither strategy was very effective, as evidenced by the community response.

"The City should rethink its public engagement policy and develop a consistent approach that improves

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meaningful, equitable outreach.
“The task force tried to meet the goals of all agencies in one project, and they didn’t fairly weigh the community response to aesthetics. Surely, the Edmonds community is a stakeholder in the project on equal footing with BNSF, WSDOT, Community Transit, and Sound Transit.

“Destroying the beach with a ‘freeway’ off-ramp should be considered a ‘fatal flaw,’ just like BNSF considered any track alteration a ‘fatal flaw.’

“Edmonds Street Waterfront Connector is what happens when engineers and representatives from major transportation agencies design things for themselves – all function, no form. The community was not impressed, drew a line in the sand, and said ‘not here.’ I agree. We need to find a better solution.

“I am happy to live in a community that is politically active. The City could do a better job harnessing the time and talent of its citizens for this and future projects.”

**Neil Tibbott, mayoral candidate**

Tibbott, who has voiced support for the connector, wanted his statement from the June 18 City Council meeting to suffice. On Tuesday, he supported rejecting the connector. See his comments in the Beacon’s main story on the connector.

**Diane Buckshtnis, Position 4 incumbent**

“I oppose the current plan for the Waterfront Connector to be located over the Brackett’s Landing Shoreline Sanctuary (ECCDC 5.32.005). The connector is out-of-scale and would create a massive intrusion on our only public beach north of the ferry, which is home to our internationally renown dive park.

“I have supported a triage center to be built on the west side of the railroad tracks coupled with the Marine One Fire Boat or a similar option. The administration stated council would be committing funding for this medical emergency service to ‘in perpetuity.’

“A massive concrete structure would also commit the council to a colossal eyesore that would create an environmental and/or social threat, more police jobs for safety, traffic congestion from constant ferry off-loading and on-loading, and much more to an ‘in perpetuity’ condition, or until future generations bulldoze it down to create open space.

“We owe ourselves, our kids, our grandkids, and everyone that visits Edmonds the ability to see unobstructed views of the horizon, to be allowed to play in the warm sun on the beach, and just experiencing the glee of open space and fresh air.”

**Jenna Nand, Position 4 challenger**

“I have consistently spoken out against the connector. As a longtime resident of Edmonds, I strongly believe that such drastic development on our waterfront is out of step with Edmonds’



Photo courtesy of City of Edmonds

Here’s the latest version of the proposed Waterfront Connector that was being considered for emergency access to the west side of the train tracks.

small-town charm.

“It was a mistake for our current council to have put this plan forward without consulting the voters. I believe that taxpayer funds should be spent on infrastructure projects on Highway 99, which has had multiple pedestrian fatalities occur every year due to the lack of crosswalks.

“Our beautiful waterfront is also a marine sanctuary and underwater park. There has been no environmental impact analysis done on the proposed connector. Nor, to my knowledge, has the present council consulted with area tribes to be better understand how this radical development would impact their ancestral lands.

“As an Edmonds City Council candidate, I vow to protect our beautiful Edmonds beaches from unwanted development projects.”

**Vivian Olson, Position 5 candidate**

“Does Edmonds need any above-grade connector? I pursued an answer to this question. My best data came from the study commissioned by the state of Washington Joint Transportation Committee. Every at-grade crossing in the state was included.

“The report published in January 2017, ‘Prioritization of Prominent Road-Rail Conflicts in Washington State,’ prioritizes Edmonds (and others) for funding of above-grade crossing projects (Page 28 of the report).

“This pre-prioritization explains why state funding came through so quickly on the City-approved Edmonds Street Waterfront Connector. Quoted from the report’s executive summary: ‘At-grade crossings, where roads cross railroad tracks at the same level, can typically function adequately while populations and traffic levels are low.’

“They aren’t.
“Edmonds’ at-grade crossings, and all others on the state’s prioritized list, are currently blocked an average of two hours daily (executive summary, pages iii and iv). This slows response times for ambulance, police, and fire even during regular train operations, and response is completely stopped along with the stopped train, when the train

is unyielding at the crossings. Good government should be looking ahead for infrastructure planning ...

“It will get worse.
“Please read the study. If you don’t agree with the conclusion of the state (and the three consulting companies behind the study: Transpogroup, Parametrix, and Berk) that we need an above-grade connector somewhere in Edmonds after that, let’s talk about it. I am finding this evidence convincing, but am always open to other inputs.

“Help me figure out how we move on from there. On one hand, it is a fundamental job of government to provide public safety – the infrastructure to support it is part and parcel. On the other hand, I don’t want the citizens to feel like something is being forced on them.

“I know from spending months with the original solutions vetted by the task force and consultants, and considering nuanced changes to those solutions, that none inspire enthusiasm and all are much more costly.

“If going forward with the next phase of the Edmonds Street Connector (the only way to get to the environmental impact statement that relates to it), we need to collaborate to incorporate a design concept that better fits our seaside town – less ‘Jetsons’ and more ‘boardwalk.’”

**Alicia Crank, Position 5 candidate**

“I do not approve of the Waterfront Connector project. I fully support needing a plan/infrastructure for emergencies, but the final result needs to make good business and safety sense throughout its planning.

“I know that there were multiple discussions, community input and planning from City staff and council for several years, but there should have been some pivoting as more details, new information, and a bigger picture started to emerge: increased costs, lack of supporting staff resources (police and fire), whether or not emergency access easement would be granted.

“The last item is too big of an ‘if’ to commit so many taxpayer dollars to without having alternatives in place. It

is time to pivot and reexamine.
“While an argument can be made for both sides of the living standards issue, I believe it is important to put more weight on how the current project would affect area residents on a day-to-day basis versus the occasional emergency it is being planned to manage. In my opinion, the current plan’s inconveniences significantly outweigh the possible benefit it would provide on occasion.

“This alone should warrant discussion/revisiting alternative solutions and resources. I would support reallocating funds and other related resources to more immediate public safety needs, such as adding much needed additional staff to the fire stations as well as safety provisions along the Highway 99 corridor.”

**Susan Paine, Position 6 candidate**

“The connector, as it is currently designed, will destroy the beach environment and ambiance at Brackett’s Landing (just north of the ferry dock). I can’t support this proposal. It would be terrible for the environment, unreasonably expensive, and unattractive.

“There are better options that should be considered. These options should include a smaller profile, something that doesn’t connect onto the waterfront; a design that is supported by local emergency responders; and is ADA compliant – without needing to accommodate a full-size vehicle.

“Many communities, inside and outside Edmonds, enjoy our waterfront and the local businesses that are nearby. We all deserve an open and welcoming beach experience. The preservation and restoration of our beaches will serve our future generations.”

**Diana White, Position 6 candidate**

“I am in favor of providing emergency access to the waterfront and a transparent public process to ensure that goal is reached.

“Emergency access is vital with the coming addition of a second train track. The waterfront area continues to grow with a new Senior Center, businesses, and robust recreational activities. First responders need time and equipment to do their jobs properly, and emergency vehicle access is a critical component to saving lives when every minute counts.

“To date, the process has cost \$1.7 million of taxpayer dollars and over 15 months of intensive study by industry consultants and others. The public process included two City-led work groups, four open public meetings, two online surveys, and several City Council votes. In the end, 51 alternatives have been considered.

“However, it is too early in the process, and City staff needs more information to know whether the connector is feasible from an environmental and engineering standpoint. If the connector is not viable, keep reviewing the options until one is found.

“Doing nothing is not an option. If the City knowingly identifies risk and does

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**The BEACON**

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Earling has repeatedly expressed his support of the connector.

Before a vote on Nelson's motion, Councilmember Dave Teitzel offered an amendment, in which members could vote to proceed with Parametrix's environmental studies.

Councilmembers Nelson, Diane Buckshnis, and Adrienne Fraley-Monillas voted "no," as expected. Councilmembers Tibbott, Johnson, and Thomas Mesaros voted "yes."

Tibbott, the last to cast his vote, voted against Teitzel's amendment, which led to an audible gasp among the audience. (For those keeping score, mayoral candidates Tibbott, Nelson and Brad Shipley are against the connector placed on Edmonds Street, while candidate Johnson is for.)

Nelson's original amendment, at that point, was a foregone conclusion, as it passed 4-3 with the same votes.

After the cheering stopped, Earling spoke to audience members, many with protest signs and ready to speak out against the connector.

"With that vote," he said, "unless you all want to hang around to do your three minutes, I don't see any reason for it."

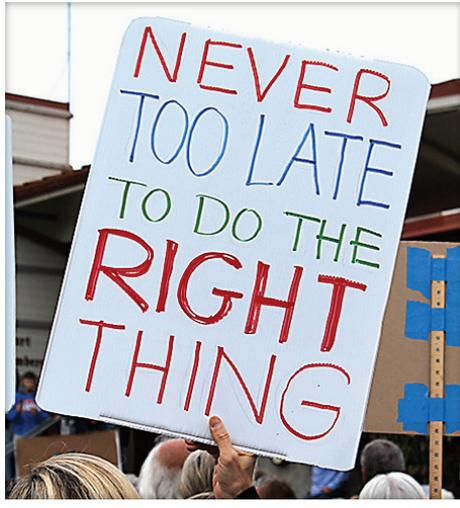
After a break, however, many spoke out, anyway.

Earling, in his closing comments, later added: "With the action the council has taken tonight, I will be notifying our state and federal legislators that the interest in the connector has been withdrawn."

"And I'll also notify the Legislature that we no longer have the need for \$7.05 million, and I'm assuming that the Port (of Edmonds) will hear soon enough, and probably will withdraw their \$1.5 million also."

To date, the City had amassed \$8.55 million, a significant local match to seek federal funds for the \$27.5 million project.

Despite Earling's comments, many in the audience said they would continue to monitor the City's actions when and



Beacon photo by Brian Soergel

One of many rally signs against a proposed bridge from Sunset Avenue down to Brackett's Landing North.

if further connector issues are brought up.

**"A diversity of voices"**

On Wednesday, Tibbott said the reason he changed his mind on the connector was because of comments councilmembers received, as well as comments he's heard while meeting a wide variety of people in Edmonds over the last couple of months.

"I heard from a diversity of voices from across our city," Tibbott said. "The opposition to the connector did not come from one group, and it wasn't just one reason. But when I put them together, I could not justify spending more money to study an option that was clearly not going to be acceptable no matter what the design or who paid for it."

Tibbott said he also disagreed with the characterization made by some councilmembers that the administration favors one part of the city over another.

"It's simply not accurate," he said. "We have infrastructure projects in var-

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**CITY BRIEFS**

**Two Snohomish Health District leaders resign**

The Snohomish Board of Health announced Tuesday, June 18, that it has accepted and approved the resignation of two top leaders of the Snohomish Health District, administrator Jefferson Ketchel and health officer Dr. Mark Beatty.



Mark Beatty



Jefferson Ketchel

According to Edmonds City Councilmember Adrienne Fraley-Monillas, one of 15 board members, "the board decided to go in another direction. We are restructuring the duties as a whole."

The board also appointed Shawn Frederick, the District's administration services director, as interim administrator.

Dr. Chris Spitters, the district's contracted physician for tuberculosis control, will serve as acting health officer until a permanent replacement can be selected.

Ketchel joined the Health District as the environmental health director in July 2015 and has been the administra-

tor since April 2017.

Beatty joined the Snohomish Health District as the health officer in August 2017. He is a pediatrician and preventive medicine specialist with a master's in public health from Johns Hopkins.

As the health officer, one of Beatty's primary focuses was his work related to the opioid epidemic.

**Senior Center parking lot to close week of June 24**

The Senior Center parking lot will close beginning June 24. It is expected to remain closed for a year as the current building is demolished and rebuilt to accommodate the Edmonds Waterfront Center.

People are encouraged to park in the lot to the south of the Senior Center on the corner of West Dayton Street and Railroad Avenue, near the entrance to Olympic Beach.

For general information: edmondssc.org/ewc/.

For more information regarding the parking lot closure, planned parking lot improvements, and the beachfront improvements, contact Carrie Hite, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services director, at 425-771-0256 or carrie.hite@edmondswa.gov.

- Brian Soergel

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nothing, the council leaves the Edmonds community and its visitors without equal access to emergency services and therefore jeopardizes public safety.

"It is uncertain what the future emergency access will look like, but to cancel and delay the process now will only make the project more expensive in the future. The current studies and surveys will become obsolete and taxpayers will pay twice for information that is viable now.

"The environment and beach preservation are important to Edmonds residents. So is the safety of our community. These important goals can be accomplished simultaneously."

**Laura Johnson, Position 7 candidate**

"I believe that providing for public safety is a crucial role of government. My position regarding the Waterfront Connector project is that we should invest more of our infrastructure dollars

in the Highway 99 corridor - and work to prevent the injuries and deaths that are already documented - and look for a less costly, less invasive, more environmentally friendly option to provide emergency access to our waterfront.

"I am thankful for the previous work done by the citizens and leaders who came together to preserve the waterfront and beach we enjoy today. According to the City's website, 'A group of concerned citizens, the Brackett's Landing Task Force, rallied community support to save the waterfront from destruction ... the first goal was accomplished in 1980, when the Edmonds City Council voted to declare Brackett's Landing a marine sanctuary.'

"Also on the City's website, this 'means that marine resource area lying between the inner harbor line and the westernmost boundary of the railroad right of way and between the ferry dock on Main Street and a line extending due west from the end of Caspers Street.'

"The current plan would be built on

top of, and encompass much of this protected area! Like those before us, we need leaders who will continue to protect and preserve the natural beauty of the waterfront for the generations to come.

**Nathan Monroe, Position 7 candidate**

"I believe that responsible planning establishes the need for something to maintain access to the waterfront in the face of increasing train traffic.

"The current design has been chosen after years of study, and I want to respect that process. I appreciate the concept that taking advantage of the existing grade differences limits local area impacts and increases affordability. I also appreciate that the existing concept is just that, a concept and will need refinement through the design and permitting process.

"If everything were perfect, then I think WSDOT, Port, Amtrak, and Sound Transit would join Edmonds in

constructing a crossing further south as part of a multimodal development. As a councilmember, I would continue to pursue this discussion with our stakeholders and work hard towards a win-win-win solution.

"For example, this solution could include phasing the development, starting with the crossing and connecting roadways and leaving the ferry dock, parking garage, and train station until another phase. However, in the event those conversations proved fruitless (as they have to date) or their outcomes too costly and in the face of having no solution, I would support advancing the design of the connector as a practical and affordable solution to the problem (provided construction cost estimates remain reasonable).

"With my public works planning, engineering, and construction experience, I'm confident that we can shape this project to minimize risks and maximize utility to the city."

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agitor a week later as he almost single-handedly helped to defeat the next phase of the connector, a years-long City effort to provide emergency access to the waterfront in case of prolonged train blockage (think fire or medical emergency) of the at-grade Dayton and Main street track crossings.

Councilmembers voted to halt the project Tuesday, June 18.

“It was amazing to see several hundred people show up on behalf of the over 8,000 who signed the petition,” Tripp said after the meeting.

“I am so proud of everyone, and the collective effort worked. Standing for our community values won the day. We will celebrate the win tonight, but we won’t declare victory overall, as there are still ways this could come back to life.

“There is a button on the Change.Org petition where I can ‘declare victory’; we are not pushing that button yet. We will continue to collect signatures, 100-200 per day all throughout the summer and into the fall, so that our number swell so that it makes us even stronger to stop potential reversals or funny business down the road. Thank you to everyone. I think I’m going to sleep in tomorrow. I’m amazed and blessed by the people who love Edmonds Beach.”

**“I love this town”**

In the past few weeks, Tripp’s frenzied efforts have led to local television and radio coverage.

Tripp is a 47-year-old California transplant who moved with his wife and children to Edmonds in 2011 from Tiburon, a picturesque town at the terminus of a craggy peninsula extending into the San Francisco Bay.

“Edmonds reminds me a lot of where I grew up,” said Tripp, who works in leadership and organizational development. “I love this town above the waterfront. It’s unique. I take the train to Seattle every day for work, and I come back here and I feel like I’ve stepped off into a different world. I decompress. I



Beacon photo by Brian Soergel

Cam Tripp speaks before a rally June 18 against the planned Waterfront Connector.

walk here in the morning and gather my thoughts and my prayers. It’s a magical place.”

Although Tripp refers to his website and Facebook pages as “Save Edmonds Beach,” he is specifically referring to the stretch north of the Brackett’s

Landing North jetty.

Tripp and others have made the argument against the connector that the area is designated a marine sanctuary, an issue that helped sway the vote on Tuesday.

According to Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Director Carrie Hite, Brackett’s Landing North – which is between the ferry dock and the jetty – is indeed a shoreline sanctuary, as written in the Edmonds City code.

“The beach north of the jetty, in my understanding, does not have a name in our parks plan, or inventory list,” Hite said.

Edmonds code states that “Brackett’s Landing Shoreline Sanctuary” means “that marine resource area lying between the inner harbor line and the western most boundary of the railroad right of way and between the ferry dock on Main Street and a line extending due west from the end of Caspers Street.

“The Brackett’s Landing Shoreline Sanctuary is reserved solely to provide the public, scientists and students the opportunity to examine over a period of time the ecological relationships within such area.”

Because of that wording, would the City’s code have to be rewritten to accommodate the connector?

“The quick answer is ‘no,’” Development Services Director Patrick Doherty

said.

Public Works Director Phil Williams elaborated.

“It would not need to be rewritten,” he said. “A permit can be issued by the Parks director if there are public safety concerns being addressed by the project.”

**“Put up or shut up”**

Before his current job – Tripp didn’t want to mention his employer’s name – Tripp conducted “leadership and organizational development” for a company called Fierce Conversations.

“I used to travel around the world talking about how you have authentic, robust conversation about issues in your organization.”

For him, the connector is one of them.

“So my wife is like, hey, you either better put up or shut up, because you’re complaining about this all the time you come by here,” he said.

The result: the website, Facebook page, and change.org petition in an attempt to draw attention to the connector. Although the City held open houses, conducted polls and devoted hours and hours to the connector, it’s only in the past two weeks that citizen opposition has blown up, largely due to Tripp’s efforts.

A previous website, nosunsetconnector.com (which Tripp is not involved in), did not take off, largely due to its anonymous nature and because no one stepped forward from the mysterious group to promote it.

Tripp said he wanted to own his site to show credibility.

“There’s a lot of people around who are so busy, they don’t have time to attend meetings. They work downtown, they have a second job. They have kids, soccer practice, chores around the house. To go to a public information meeting is unrealistic for the majority of people that I know.”

Tripp doesn’t mind exaggerating to get his point across. A picture gallery on savedmondsbeach.com shows a multi-lane freeway-type flyover lane over the beach.

Tripp calls it “augmented reality,” his form of an artist’s rendering. The City’s rendering, he said, is just that, as it’s gone through several phases and will likely change again.

“So we have no idea what it will look like,” he said. “I love photography. If the pen is mightier than the sword and a photo is worth a thousand words, I think in the social media age to have an actual photo of something that you can share is extremely powerful. And so if I have to weigh out an artist rendering versus (an) actual photo of the place, I’m going with the actual photo, even if it’s augmented reality.”

Although there has been the inevitable concern from some that a connector/overpass would attract the homeless or a criminal element, Tripp said that is not his concern.

“I’m not worried about that. There are other places you can hide out down here. Police officers are great with keeping this place clean and friendly for people. I’m worried more about the aesthetics.

“It’s almost like it’s spiritual for the

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ious phases of design and construction happening constantly. We've actually secured more grant funding for Highway 99 than we have for the connector."

In order to move forward, Tibbott said he wants to review the work of the connector task force and sift through the 51 options they studied.

"I want to know if anything has changed since the study was done, and what new information we have now. One of the co-chairs changed his mind shortly after the recommendation was made, and I think it's important for us to know what happened.

"We also need to summarize the concerns that were raised about the connector because they represent values that will drive whatever solutions we implement in the future. The concerns I heard had a unifying theme, and we need to capture that input to make better choices for the future."

### Vocal opposition

Before Tuesday's meeting, hundreds of people gathered in front of the Public Safety Complex, which houses City Council chambers, to rally against the connector.

The rally was the result of efforts from Edmonds resident Cam Tripp, who created the Save Edmonds Beach website and Facebook page, as well as a Change.org petition.

Before he spoke and introduced speakers, Joni Mitchell's "Big Yellow Taxi" – "paved paradise, put up a parking lot" – played on a loop through a Bluetooth speaker.

Speakers included mayoral candidate Mike Nelson and City Council candidates Laura Johnson, Alicia Crank, and Susan Paine.

Also speaking were Pamela Bond, a member of the Snohomish Tribal Council, and Paul Wagner of Saanich First Nations. Both spoke against the connector and sang a song. Later, during public comment, Bond said the City did not obtain her tribe's approval for

the connector.

Chants of "Save Our Beach" peppered the 45-minute rally, and the chants continued outside council chambers, which frequently stopped Public Works Director Phil Williams as he gave a presentation on the connector leading up to public comment.

### "Don't Block Our Beach"

It was back in July 2012 that a number of citizens gathered on the grass south of the ferry terminal for a "Don't Block Our Beach" rally in response to increased train traffic from a proposed coal train terminal in Bellingham. The proposal for the Gateway Pacific Terminal at Cherry Point was finally dropped in February 2017.

Although that proposal never came to fruition, it doesn't negate the fact that more trains are coming. It's no secret that BNSF wants to add a second track through downtown Edmonds to connect to dual tracks to the north and south of the city.

There is unanimous agreement among councilmembers that something needs to be done – it just appears that the waterfront connector is not an option.

"At some point, it's going to be much worse than it is today," Williams said during a committee meeting last week. The number of trains passing through town could increase from the roughly 40 today to more than 100 a day within the next 15 to 18 years, he said.

"And during that time frame, probably earlier, (BNSF) is going to want to pursue the double-tracking project through Edmonds, which geometrically increases the complexity of those two at-grade crossings at Dayton and Main streets."

The City claimed the connector was the most feasible, affordable, and appropriate near-term solution to the growing problem of congestion, safety, and access to the waterfront.

But many citizens, and a majority of councilmembers, disagreed.

So the issue remains.

► from **MANY REASONS** page 17

(Mike Nelson).

There is no candidate in the field more qualified to be the next Edmonds mayor than Mike Nelson, or who will be a better leader.

**Mike Shaw**  
**Edmonds**

### 'Racially charged' headline was inflammatory

Regarding your June 6 story, "Business owner closes store due to racially charged graffiti," your definitively stated headline of "racially charged graffiti" is misleading, inflammatory, and an example of bad journalism.

The stated police suspicion of racial motivation, from what I've read, appears by far the less likely motive. Though the store owner was apparently within his legal rights to move his truck rental business to his new location, some local residents expressed their concern about it.

Conclusion: The store owner is part of a minority group, thus the resident's concerns must be racist rather than a concern about that particular business being in that particular location.

Ergo, if the owner were white, the resi-

► from **THE FORCE** page 18

locals who live here. Like this is almost a little beach that nobody knows about. The people who live here know this area, and they know that they can have some privacy and reconnect with who they are, with nature, and with God. The connector would completely change the whole vibe."

### "Putting myself out there"

All this exposure could be daunting for some. But Tripp said his parents were never afraid to speak out on causes they supported, including trying to block development of an open space in California. His mother was a reporter and his brother is still a reporter.

dents would be fine with that business being there.

It seems to me from what I've read the owner's ethnicity is incidental to his neighbor's concerns.

I'm not condoning it, but the window graffiti "go bac(k)" by far most likely refers to his returning the business to its prior Aurora Avenue location due to residential neighborhood concerns.

But perhaps the police, and maybe your paper, don't have a genuinely high opinion of your Edmonds neighbors, or at least are subject to reflexively jump in agreement when a minority person plays the race card.

**Arthur Levine**  
**Lynnwood**

*Editor's note: The just-released Associated Press 2019 Stylebook agrees with your opinion on world usage, to a degree. It notes that journalists should generally avoid use vague phrases such as "racially charged," "racially motivated," and "racially tinged" "to describe situations in which race is or is alleged or perceived to be a central issue, but that do not meet the definition of 'racist' or 'racism.'" "*

*As alternatives, notes AP, "racially divisive" and "racially sensitive" may be preferred.*

"I'm still not used to it. I was purposeful about not putting myself out there; I wanted to get the cause out there. Then people start wondering, and started asking, who is this? So I thought the cause would lose credibility unless someone claimed credit for starting it."

Tripp admits his "unmasking" has made him vulnerable.

"I mean, you're telling the City that they're doing something wrong and you're telling them to change it. So it's time to revisit this. I mean, if you look at the City's own funded research, the mid-block option was the number one option.

"It just felt like there were other agendas at play that people weren't talking about."

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