

(Continued from previous page)

\$5 million from the its emergency response fund and later doubled the program's funding with an additional \$5 million.

Still, that will cover only a fraction of the businesses that applied.

The Regional Economic Partnership is the department of commerce's Associated Development Organization (ADO), a designation that makes it Whatcom County's commerce representative for economic development matters. As such, the Regional Economic Partnership had the task of narrowing the pool of applicants to about 100, Stark said. Those applications were forwarded to the department of commerce, which makes the final decision.

The Regional Economic Partnership tried to be fair in its decisions by selecting businesses from all sectors and areas of the county, Stark said. The group also tried to put forth a "good portion" of businesses owned by women, tribal members, veterans and minorities, she said. Funds are expected to start reaching businesses in May.

"To determine if this restaurant was more worthy than this other restaurant ... the need far exceeded the resource," Stark said. "It was a great thing that the government did, but at the same time, it was heartbreaking. It's not like anything that I ever dreamed I would have to do in this job, and it's something that I don't wish on anyone else to have to do."

**Tsunami of unemployment claims as ESD expands eligibility**  
Washington state's Employment Security Department (ESD)

hasn't yet released the number of unemployment claims filed last week, but it expected to see a tsunami of new claims. The federal CARES Act, which expanded unemployment eligibility, went into effect on April 18.

From April 12 to 18, 82,435 people made first-time claims for unemployment benefits and 605,514 people total filed for unemployment, ESD said in an April 23 press release. The number of new claims was down 42 percent from the previous week, but the total number of claims continues to grow.

**Some public lands, fishing and golfing to re-open May 5**  
Washingtonians will soon have much more access to public lands,

governor Jay Inslee said during a televised April 27 announcement to the public.

Starting Tuesday, May 5, most state parks, along with public lands managed by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife will re-open, along with fishing, hunting and golf. Some national parks and forests are expected to open at about the same time. Most land managers closed public lands in March, after the governor issued a stay-at-home order effective March 23 to slow the spread of the new coronavirus.

Most state parks will open on May 5, Washington State Parks director Don Hoch said, but some would need extra time to coordinate re-opening with local communities.

The governor's office is working with the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service on opening some federal lands at about the same time, said Jon Synder, the governor's policy advisor on outdoor recreation and economic development. "Please call ahead and make sure the place you want to go is open and expect that some of our national partners will not have all their places open yet," he said.

Inslee has not extended his stay-at-home order beyond May 4. Last week Inslee took a step toward re-opening the state by announcing that construction projects already underway could restart, provided they could be done with adequate physical distancing.

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**CITY OF BLAINE**

Due to COVID-19 and the Governor's Proclamation, meetings are now only open to the public telephonically. Information on how to listen to the meeting live will be on the City Council agenda which is located on the City's website homepage under Your Government, City Council, City Council Agenda.

**Monday, May 11**  
6:00pm – Regular City Council Meeting

**Tuesday, May 26**  
(Monday the 25th is Memorial Day)  
6:00pm – Regular City Council Meeting

**Monday, June 8**  
6:00pm – Regular City Council Meeting

**Monday, June 22**  
6:00pm – Regular City Council Meeting

All City offices are currently closed to the public.  
Contact information for staff and Councilmembers can be found on the City's website.

Call (360) 332-8311 or visit our website.  
[www.cityofblaine.com](http://www.cityofblaine.com)

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