

# Mukilteo Beacon

YOUR HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

728 3rd St., Ste. D Mukilteo, WA 98275

Volume XXIX

Number 43

July 7, 2021

## Mukilteo is finally fully open

*Businesses applaud lifting of most COVID-19 restrictions*

BY DAVID PAN

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More than 15 months after the state took drastic measures to curb the spread of the coronavirus, people are finally starting to breathe a little easier.

June 30 marked the lifting of most of the state-imposed COVID-19 restrictions. People can now forgo masks and physical distancing under most circumstances, and businesses are free from occupancy limits.

Unvaccinated people still have to wear masks, and indoor gatherings of more than 10,000 still must meet certain requirements. Masks still have to be worn by all at health-care facilities, public transportation, and congregate settings, such as schools or day-care centers.

But otherwise life seems to be getting back to normal.

That's especially good news for the hard-hit restaurant industry. Many restaurants shut down at the start of the pandemic and then later opened only for takeout. The state then imposed strict indoor dining capacity limits of 25%, and then 50%. Those restrictions are now history.

"Being able to open at 100% capacity has been such a blessing for us," said Ivar's Mukilteo Landing general manager Greg Covey. "We have added back 50 seats and 14 bar stools that sat empty since March 2020. We have for the most part kept our COVID protocols in place. They are something we can maintain for the foreseeable



Above, Mukilteo Family YMCA executive director Cynthia Kelly is seeing an increase in adults and youths returning to the YMCA, though the numbers are still below pre-pandemic levels. Right, Ivar's Mukilteo Landing assistant general manager Charlie Zoller and his staff were busy all day Monday as many residents went out to eat on what was a holiday for many.

Beacon photos by David Pan

future, and we want to continue to make our guests feel safe and comfortable dining with us. Plexiglass is still up. One fun noticeable change is guests at the bar top."

At Sully's Pizza & Calzones, the changes

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## New parklet coming to waterfront

*Public, private partnership to develop small park near Ivar's*

BY DAVID PAN

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The Port of Everett and Ivar's are partnering to bring a new parklet where the approach ramp to the former ferry terminal is located.

A parklet is defined as the repurposing of parking, or in this case an approach ramp, for seating, park space or extra dining

space.

The yet-to-be finalized plans include all three elements, according to Ivar's President Bob Donegan.

The tentative plans for the parklet include planters with trees, bushes and flowers, a public viewing area over the water, benches, and tables.

The Port of Everett approached Ivar's about the project.

"They asked if we would develop the plan, plant it, and operate it and keep it clean and safe," Donegan said. "In return, we would put some tables in the park for the public to use. The restaurant would be able to serve liquor, beer and wine. Our portion would be fenced off."

The Port leased the approach ramp to the old Mukilteo Ferry Terminal to Washington State Ferries (WSF). After the opening of the new terminal, the Port evaluated potential uses for the approach ramp parcel of land at 700 Front St., next door to Ivar's. In concert with the City of Mukilteo's desire to have public access to the waterfront, the Port made an agreement with MSI Mukilteo, LLC, Ivar's landlord, for the development of the parklet during the May 4 Everett Port Commission meeting.

The initial patio design featured private seating for restaurant customers, as well as seating for the general public. MSI will perform maintenance of the public area, and when the longer-term design is developed, also contribute to the public access area improvements with a limit of \$20,000.

Donegan said the timetable for the construction of the park was still in the works



Beacon photo by David Pan

A new parklet or small park is planned at the approach ramp to the old ferry terminal.

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## Mukilteo seeking candidates for city boards, commissions

BY DAVID PAN

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Mukilteans have always answered the call to serve their city.

When two of the current City Councilmembers – Bob Champion and Sarah Kneller – decided not to run for reelection, eight candidates filed to fill their positions. Three other candidates are running for position No. 1, currently held by Louis Harris, who is running to retain his position.

The City is again calling on its residents to volunteer for a number of open positions on the Rosehill Community Board, Parks and Arts Commission, Youth Advisory Committee and Historical Preservation Commission.

The Rosehill Community Board has three regular vacancies, which are three-year terms. Three boardmembers' terms expired in May. The City also seeking is a student member for the Rosehill Community Board. The student member must be a student from the Mukilteo School District; residency in Mukilteo is not required. The term of this student position is one year, starting in August.

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have meant adding back about 20 more seats to its indoor dining area.

"It has brought back a lot of guests in the last week for indoor and outdoor dining," said Sully's Richard Haines.

Tapped Mukilteo co-owner Sean Drought said most of his customers have been looking forward to the loosening of COVID-restrictions. He is seeing more people sitting at the bar, mingling, and dancing to live music.

Drought isn't sure what the next six months are going to bring, but he is optimistic.

"I truly believe people need to connect and engage with their friends and family and am happy to give them a place to do that," he said.

Covey also has a good feeling about the future.

"We are excited and hopeful for a busy summer," he said. "Providing our guests with a wonderful dining experience and getting back to doing what we know best is our focus. It's such a beautiful location. We're happy to be able to share it again with as many people as possible."

Restaurants obviously weren't the only businesses impacted by the statewide shutdown. Gyms and fitness centers were among the first businesses ordered closed by Gov. Jay Inslee.

The Mukilteo Family YMCA shifted to virtual classes and then gradually reopened as the state lifted some of its restrictions.

After operating at 50%, the Mukilteo Family YMCA no longer has any capacity limitations.

"We're definitely seeing more adults in the gym," said Mukilteo Family YMCA executive director Cynthia Kelly. "More adults are willing to work out, People are happier. It's hard to work out in masks."

People are still giving each other enough space when using the different pieces of equipment, and members continue to wipe down the machines, Kelly added.

Masks are no longer required at the club's popular skate park, and numbers are up for swim lessons.



Beacon photos by David Pan

All of the outdoor seating at Ivar's Mukilteo Landing was being enjoyed by customers on a beautiful Monday afternoon.

"People are willing to come back to the Y," Kelly said. "The Y is busy. People are working out longer."

Membership levels are still far below pre-pandemic levels, though. They are about a third of what they were before the pandemic.

To boost memberships, the Mukilteo Family YMCA has focused on engaging with the youth of the community.

"Camps are really strong," Kelly said. "We're trying to get kids back to the YMCA."

The club's Kids Zone recently returned. This membership benefit is available for children ages 3-9. Parents can drop off their children and work out.

"It allows families to work out and know the kids are safe and the kids are doing fun activities," Kelly said.

Traxx Racing, an entertainment complex that features adult and youth go-kart racing, an arcade, a rock-climbing wall, a variety of games and a snack bar, also shut down in mid-March 2020, but has been able to op-



Mukilteo Family YMCA front desk receptionist Laura Holden is ready to check in members.

erate more or less normally since the move to Phase 2 in February because of its large facility capacity.

"I feel that, from a safety perspective, we don't have any issues with the restrictions being lifted except just needing to cater to a more sanitization-minded public when it comes to shared equipment, such as helmets," said Traxx Racing general manager

Chris Kruse. "We are optimistic about the immediate future and are happy for the community's support of our small, locally owned business."

One aspect of the business Kruse and his staff have focused on is keeping wait times as short as possible.

Traxx Racing laid off many of its employees at the start of the pandemic. Business picked up in the spring, and many of its employees returned.

The Mukilteo Family YMCA, however, is facing staffing issues.

"I think everybody is struggling to have enough staff," Kelly said. "We're a third of where we used to be staffing wise. We're trying to figure it out like everyone else."

Kelly noted that lifeguard and swim instructors require a significant amount of training. The Kids Zone isn't able to offer infant care right now due to a lack of staffing.

Covey and Drought also are facing staffing shortages at their restaurants.

"We have had a very difficult time hiring staff for all positions," Covey said. "People are not showing up for interviews, not showing up for their first shift or quitting after just a few days. We are counting on these people, and when they don't show up or simply disappear with zero communication, it is very frustrating. We have, however, been able to add some fantastic people to our staff, which is allowing us to keep up with the welcome increase in business."

Drought faces similar problems. "Staffing is a huge challenge, but we do have an awesome team right now," he said.

Haines encourages the public to be patient with all of the small shops and restaurants.

"We do have to hire and train new employees and retain old employees as how things were done 14 months ago," he said.

As the state continues to make progress against COVID-19, Drought still remembers how a deadly virus impacted everyone's lives.

"I hope people don't take their ability to hang out with their closest friends and family for granted as this pandemic moves further into our past," he said. "Technology can't replace in-person interactions."

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