

From: [Jason Welker](#)
Cc: [Jeremy Grimm](#); [Holly Ellis](#); [Corey Coon](#); [Sarah Lynds](#); [Cheryl Hughes](#); [Gavin Gilcrease](#); [Zach Jones](#); [Melissa Ward](#); [Erik Bush](#); [Fonda Jovick](#)
Subject: Council bcc"ed: First and Bridge statements at last night"s meeting
Date: Thursday, November 6, 2025 4:53:14 PM
Attachments: [Outlook-3auhjd3n.png](#)

Dear Council,

I wish to follow up on my statements towards the end of last night's meeting. I want to clarify some of what I said and correct the record, as I misrepresented some facts from the podium that need correcting.

1. I stated that City money would be used to build the retaining wall and fill the hole to widen our sidewalk through the Right of Way on Bridge Street. This was incorrect. The \$385,000 in the City's possession is a security provided by the developer that can only be used for these specific improvements. It is not discretionary City funding. No money will be saved by not doing this project.
2. The planning department has been aware of the project to build the retaining wall and fill in our right of way in the hole and has attended multiple meetings. I implied otherwise, which was inaccurate.

My intention last night was to remind Council of the limitations we are under because we no longer own the property that currently provides access to Farmin's Landing. I heard Councilwoman Duquette and Councilman Schreiber express concerns about through-access to Farmin's Landing for bicycles and pedestrians. While an easement for the purpose of pedestrian access to Farmin's Landing exists on the plat for One Bridge Street, site plans that the developer has up to this point brought to the City for review do not provide pedestrian access down to City property, rather they show a four foot-path across their private patio at street level. Any access from the terminus of that path would be up to the City to develop and fund. To be clear, **this impact is not the result of the current sidewalk project**; it was the result of the land swap five years ago.

I stated that the developer and other property owners north on this block will lose access to the rear of their buildings if we move forward with the sidewalk project. To clarify, **the current sidewalk project is not what will eliminate this access**; it is the result of the land swap and the proposed development of One Bridge Street. Furthermore, while the current configuration of property lines along Farmin's Landing may preclude future vehicular access to City property there, there may be solutions through which the City acquires property from some of the owners north of One Bridge Street to maintain permanent vehicle access to Farmin's Landing, as was envisioned in the 2020 Parks Master Plan. So, it was not truthful for me to say that access to City property would permanently be eliminated if this sidewalk project moved forward. 1) **The sidewalk is not the reason for the loss of access**, and 2) Future land purchases or easements secured by the City could assure long-term vehicle access from the north.

It was not my intention to scuttle the initiation of the planned sidewalk CIP at last night's meeting; but that is what my comments did. **For that I apologize.** What I should have done *before* last night's meeting was offered to include a paragraph or two of context in the staff report regarding the status of meetings with the owner/developer of One Bridge Street. Around

six months ago we met with this developer and his team, and it was during that meeting that the challenges around access to Farmin's Landing arising from the land swap that took away the drive aisle from Bridge Street were first brought to light. Following that meeting Bill and I made several requests for follow-up meetings with the developer to explore the idea of possibly reversing the land swap, which we believed would be mutually beneficial to the developer and the City. The developer did not respond to these meeting requests and the issue fell by the wayside in the months since then.

On Tuesday this week the owner's local representative contacted the City to request another pre-app meeting. With that request in mind, I asked Council to give planning staff another chance to broach this challenging topic with the developer.

This morning, Bill Dean and I connected with Cliff Davis (the owner) in a phone conversation, during which we briefed him on the direction given by Council last night. Cliff, unprompted, said that he understood his current site plan would likely not work since it eliminates vehicle access to Farmin's Landing. He expressed willingness to entertain an idea of "unwinding" the land swap, and when Bill and I pursued this idea further it emerged that what he actually had in mind was not a reversal of the land swap but possibly selling or donating (as a tax write-off) the rear 3,400 square feet of his property, that which was acquired in the land swap, back to the City. Bill and I indicated that we were in no position to negotiate any such transaction but thanked him for being open-minded about how to best assure community access to Farmin's Landing for the benefit of both the public and the private property owners who share that property line north of One Bridge Street.

After this morning's conversation with Cliff, **I believe at this time the right thing to do is to move forward with the sidewalk CIP** to not threaten the project's completion before the winter season begins. Improvements resulting from this sidewalk project and the subsequent revitalization of the First Avenue frontage at this intersection will demonstrate to Cliff Davis that the City is serious about beautification and development along the public rights of way fronting this this premiere property. When Cliff's team eventually comes back to the table to advance his project, Planning staff work with his team to achieve access to Farmin's Landing through the site plan review process. Whether that access takes the form of dedication or sale of property back to the City or of a requirement of pedestrian, bicycle, and possibly vehicle access through Cliff's property is unknown at this time. But that is what the site plan review process is for, to ensure that commercial development unfolds in a way that best assures compatibility with broader community objectives and plans.

In conclusion, **I recommend council move forward with the approval of the contract with Big Sky Excavation for the retaining wall and sidewalk CIP at the next meeting** so that this project may proceed in a timely manner.

Regards,

Jason

**Community Planning and
Development Department**



Jason Welker | Director
(208) 255-1738
(208) 290-0137 (cell)