



16
MAY 26 2026

BOARD of CLALLAM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MINUTES for the week of May 18-22, 2026

WORK SESSION – 9 a.m.

The work session convened at 9 a.m., Monday, May 18, 2026. Present were Commissioners Ozias, Johnson, and French and Administrator Mielke.

Items of discussion per the agenda published May 14 were:

- Calendar/Correspondence
- Discussion and next steps regarding a land acquisition within the boundaries of the Olympic National Park
- Agreement with Washington State University Extension for program services
- Agreement with Port Angeles Fire Department to maintain two autonomous response units
- Letter of support for the Port of Port Angeles Terminal 3 Cargo Efficiency Upgrades Project application
- Agreement with Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe for annual Olympia oyster population surveys
- Settlement agreement with Port Angeles Hardwood in relation to multiple tax year assessments
- Letter of agreement with Western Conference of Teamsters Pension Trust IBT Local 589 for collective bargaining
- Open County position review
- Update on the Criminal Justice contract
- National Association of Counties Western Interstate Region Conference overview
- Response letter to the Bureau of Indian Affairs for Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe trust lands

Meeting concluded at 11:37 a.m.

REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CLALLAM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Chair French called the meeting to order at 10 a.m., Tuesday, May 19, 2026. Also present were Commissioners Johnson and Ozias, and Administrator Mielke.

REQUEST FOR MODIFICATIONS/APPROVAL OF AGENDA

ACTION TAKEN: CRJm to adopt the agenda as presented, CMOs, mc

Public comment for agenda items

- Mark Curtis, Sequim, commented on item 1c
- Terri DiMartino, Clallam County, commented on item 1a
- John Worthington, Sequim, commented on item 1h, Alex Fane collecting ballots
- Mitch Zenobi, Sequim, commented on RCW 90.48.080 – Discharge of polluting matter in waters prohibited
- Jake Seegers, District III, commented on item 3a
- Ed Bowen, Clallam Bay, commented on items 1c, 1f, 1h, Coffee with Colleen
- Karin Cummins, Sequim, commented on public speaking, item 1a
- Eric Fehrmann, Clallam County, commented on item 1h
- Denise Lapio, Sequim, commented on item 1a
- Jeff Tozzer, Sequim, commented on item 1a

HEARING(S)

3a Ordinance amending Clallam County Code Chapter 21.01.110 – Expiration and Renewal of Permits

- Tim Havel and George Bailey, Department of Community Development, provided a staff report

ACTION TAKEN: CMOM to open the public hearing, CRJs, mc

- The following made comments:

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- Ed Bowen, Clallam Bay
- Eric Fehrmann, Clallam County
- Karin Cummins, Sequim
- John Worthington, Sequim
- Carrie Payne, Port Angeles
- Dr. Sarah Huling, District III

ACTION TAKEN: CRJm to close the public hearing, CMOs, mc

ACTION TAKEN: No action taken. DCD will do some research and bring back to a future meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

1a Approval of vouchers for May 4 – 15

The following warrants and electronic payments are approved for payment:

Accounts Payable:	Total
Warrant numbers: 9952865 – 9953058, 9953087 – 9953308	\$1,890,032.02
Electronic payments dates: n/a	\$0.00
Total Accounts Payable:	\$1,890,032.02

1b Approval of special payroll for a period ending April 15

The following voucher/warrants/electronic payments are approved for payment:

Payroll	Total
Warrant Numbers	
186150 – 186469, 9952488, 9952500 – 9952517	\$937,124.62
Electronic Payment Date	
4/24/2026 – 4/27/2026	\$333,539.97
Total Payroll:	\$1,270,664.59

1c Approval of minutes for the week of May 11

1d Resolution appointing Lindsey Sehmel and Roger Magee to the Park and Recreation Advisory Board

1e Resolution reappointing Gordon Gibbs and appointing John Teichert to the Board of Equalization

1f Call for hearing to be held on Tuesday, June 2, 2026 at 10:30 a.m. regarding an Ordinance amending the employment contract for the County Administrator

1g Letter of agreement with Western Conference of Teamsters Pension Trust IBT Local 589 for collective bargaining

1h Response letter to the Bureau of Indian Affairs for Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe trust lands

ACTION TAKEN: CRJm to adopt the consent agenda as presented, CMOs, mc

REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

- CMO reported on emergency management, Washington State Association of Counties executive meeting
- CRJ reported on Memorial Day Ceremony, Fire Resistance and Preparedness Programs, students and drug use
- CMF reported on Washington State Association of Counties Legislative Steering Committee meeting

CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS

2a Agreement with Washington State University for solid waste assistance

ACTION TAKEN: CRJm to approve, CMOs, mc

2b Settlement agreement with Port Angeles Hardwood in relation to multiple tax year assessments

ACTION TAKEN: CRJm to approve, CMOs, mc

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Carrie Payne, Port Angeles, commented on fireworks ban, Protect our Pets – POP

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- Kenneth Reandeau, Port Angeles, commented on responding to the public, permit building, substance usage, dry grass
- Mitch Zenobi, Sequim, commented on harm reduction, drugs
- Ed Bowen, Clallam Bay, commented on Olympic National Park, property
- Mary, Port Angeles, commented on harm reduction
- Unknown name, commented on drugs, homeless, safety, Veteran's Bell
- John Worthington, Sequim, commented on item 3a, safety of children, North Olympic Land Trust
- Stuart McCall, Clallam County, commented on harm reduction
- Karin Cummins, Sequim, commented on public comment time allowance, ordinances, staff introductions, funds for Eklund at Gales project, using words accordingly
- Sarah Kincaid, Sequim, commented on government, tax money
- Teresa Miller, Sequim, commented on the reports, Board of Health meeting, harm reduction, Dr. Berry, item 1h
- Mark Curtis, Sequim, commented on the payment in lieu of tax, Quileute Tribe, Bureau of Indian Affairs response letter for Jamestown Tribe item 1h
- Eric Fehrmann, Clallam County, commented a procedure change, 40 years of sobriety, opioid use name change, harm reduction, public housing
- George Peterson, Sequim, commented on Jamestown Tribe data, criminal activity, drug use, no trespass order, email from Commissioner Ozias
- Jeff Tozzer, Sequim, commented on Veteran's Bell Ceremony, item 1a, Recompete Coordinator Molly Pringle
- Terri DiMartino, Clallam County, commented on prior public comment, law enforcement profession, no compassion, housing, William Shore Memorial Pool – Steve Burke, Mark Nichols taking cases in Clallam County, Jamestown Tribe land steward
- Denise Lapiro, Sequim, commented on William Shore Memorial Pool shower vouchers
- Unknown name, commented on fireworks (see attached)

Meeting concluded at 12:32 p.m. and continued to an executive session on May 20, 2026 regarding litigation.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – May 20, 2026 at 9 a.m.

The Board convened in open session at 9 a.m. on May 20, 2026, to discuss litigation. Present were Commissioners Ozias, French and Johnson, Administrator Mielke, Prosecuting Attorney's Office Boughton and Nichols, Sheriff's Office Wenzl and King, District Court Williams and Neupert, and Human Resources/Risk Management Dennler.

The Board may recess into Executive Session to consider employment or dismissal of personnel, to review the performance of a public employee, to consult with legal counsel, to consider the position to be taken in collective bargaining, to consider acquisition or sale of real estate, or other matters per RCW 42.30.110.

ACTION TAKEN: CRJm to executive session for 1 hour, CMFs, mc

The Board recessed into executive session at 9:02 a.m.

The Board convened in open session at 10:02 a.m. and CMO noted that an additional 30 minutes is needed.

The Board recessed into executive session at 10:02 a.m.

The Board convened in open session at 10:32 a.m. and CMO noted that no action will be taken.

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The meeting concluded at 10:33 a.m.

The Board of Commissioners attended WSAC virtual update, Revenue Advisory Committee Meeting, Board of Health Meeting, and Coffee with Colleen during the week of May 18, 2026.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 26th day of May 2026

BOARD OF CLALLAM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Mark Ozias

Mark Ozias

Randy Johnson

Randy Johnson

Mike French, Chair

ATTEST:

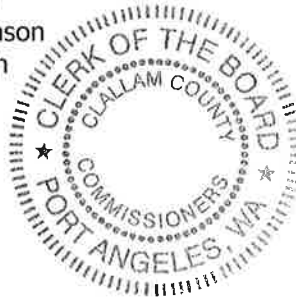
Loni Gores

Loni Gores, MMC, Clerk of the Board

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS:

ATM Administrator Todd Mielke
CMO Commissioner Mark Ozias
CRJ Commissioner Randy Johnson
CMF Commissioner Mike French

m moved
mc motion carried
s seconded



Public comment
5/19/26
Unknown citizen
name

RECOMMENDATION TO BAN THE USE OF PERSONAL FIREWORKS IN CLALLAM COUNTY

APRIL 23, 2026

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Introduction

This document is based on a previous work created by the Fireworks Steering Committee that was successful in getting a personal fireworks ban passed in the City of Port Angeles in 2016.

In presenting this document, we request that the Clallam County Commissioners enact a ban on the use of personal fireworks within the county. We have laid out a compelling case for this ban in detail in the following sections.

In order to further our request, we ask that the subject of a ban on personal fireworks be added to the County Commissioners' agenda and that a vote be taken in the coming weeks. Based on the experiences of the cities of Port Angeles, Sequim, and Port Townsend — cities who have enacted a ban — we understand that it will take time, perhaps several years, for a shift in mentality to take hold among some members of the population. With proper enforcement, we feel confident that a broader shift will indeed occur, and we would like to begin that process as soon as possible. After the devastation last year of the Bear Gulch fire, which was reportedly started by careless humans setting off fireworks at "Party Rock" at Lake Cushman, we feel this needs to be addressed quickly. Clallam County is a remote and therefore vulnerable location and cannot afford another fire like Bear Gulch.

The Case for a Ban on Personal Fireworks

We are a new group of concerned Clallam County citizens who have taken up the mantle of getting a personal fireworks ban passed on behalf of all county residents. We are not requesting a ban on public fireworks displays, which are run by experienced pyrotechnic specialists at a pre-designated location, at a specific time, with a beginning and an end. We are trying to rein in the small but noisy section of the population who like to blow things up, regardless of the effect on their neighbors, peninsula wildlife, or on the peninsula itself.

While the bans on personal fireworks in Sequim and Port Angeles have improved the situation in those cities, the rest of Clallam County is still a war zone during New Years, July 4 and surrounding days and weeks. Many thousands of dollars' worth of fireworks, both legal and illegal, are being exploded by people who likely have no permits nor insurance, and who may or may not be sober while they are setting them off. Though it may be true that the worst of the problem is caused by a small minority of one or two hundred residents, the fact remains that those individuals and groups can and do cause enough mayhem to destroy the peace for everyone else in Clallam County.

Arguments supporting a ban are provided in this section.

When the "Freedoms" of the Few Impose Upon the Many

Independence Day is supposed to be a fun-filled holiday where all residents enjoy a community celebration and honor our nation. Unfortunately, in Clallam County, many of us dread the holiday instead of celebrating it. We spend the day and surrounding days trying

to calm terrified pets or stationed on roofs with fire hoses in fear of fire. In rural areas especially, those who have horses and other livestock have few viable options for protecting their animals. For war veterans with PTSD, fireworks never signal a celebration of “freedom.”

Trauma to Domestic and Wild Animals and Birds

No one can deny that the window-rattling bangs and concussions that go on for hours and hours terrify many if not most animals – not just dogs, cats, horses and other domestic animals but the birds and wildlife that make the Olympic Peninsula a special place to live. We have laws against animal abuse and protections for wild species, but those concerns all go out the window when it comes to personal fireworks. Residents have told stories about how beloved pets have died from the trauma inflicted by hours of explosions. Others feel they have no option but to pack up and get out of the county with their pets – a very difficult, if not impossible, operation for those with horses and other livestock. Those who have financial restraints or pets such as parrots and other birds that cannot be moved, do not even have this option.

Most animals have extremely sensitive hearing, far more sensitive than humans. A dog’s hearing, for example, is ten times more sensitive than a human’s. Damage to the human ear begins at 80 to 85 decibels. A nearby clap of thunder might hit 120 decibels. Gunshots can generate sounds between 145 to 190 decibels, depending on the weapon. Fireworks can hit up to 175 decibels. A team of researchers in Mississippi tested the hearing in hunting versus non-hunting dogs, using Labrador retrievers as test cases. The test showed that “practically all of the hunting dogs have some hearing loss and practically all of the non-hunting dogs have great hearing.” The difference in hearing ability between the two groups of dogs was described as “extreme.”

One of the greatest problems with fireworks for living beings is not just that the explosions are loud but that they are sudden, unpredictable, and sporadic. This can create a sort of anticipatory anxiety in an animal that can continue for days or even months after the fireworks stop. In elderly, young, sick, or sensitive animals, the stress and anxiety can literally kill them.

Once animals have entered that fear or panic zone, it is extremely difficult to calm them. This is particularly true if the fireworks are going off nearby, such as next door or down the street. When rockets fly near or over the home, it sounds like the “threat” is coming from all sides and that there is no escape.

A great deal of information about the trauma fireworks wreaks on wild and domestic animals can be found on the internet. A few samples are provided below:

- “Loud Fireworks Affect Wildlife,” by West Sound Wildlife Shelter.
http://www.westsoundwildlife.org/wildlife/Coexisting/CO_Fireworks.html
- “Audubon Asks for Public to Protect Coastal Birds this 4th of July Weekend”.
<http://fl.audubon.org/newsroom/press-releases/2014/audubon-asks-public-protect-coastal-birds-4th-july-weekend>

- “Why Fireworks and Pets Don’t Mix,” ASPCA. <http://www.asPCA.org/blog/why-fireworks-and-pets-dont-mix>

Trauma to Residents with PTSD

Many residents, particularly veterans, suffer with various forms of PTSD. These citizens have an extremely difficult time when their neighbors are blowing up fireworks. For some, prolonged explosions can result in major anxiety and panic attacks. As one Port Angeles veteran expressed it, “The booms of mortars bring smiles to your faces, while we run and hide, looking for quiet and safe places/We flashback to times and places we would like to forget-but your 8 hour long party, it’s not over – oh no....not yet!” (A copy of this poem was previously distributed to members of Port Angeles City Council.)

Air Pollution and Litter

Fireworks are made from chemicals, including the charcoal, calcium and sulfur compounds that are used to make gunpowder. Other chemicals include strontium compounds, magnesium, dioxin-laden copper mixtures, toxic barium, and sodium nitrate. No one can avoid the toxic cloud of smoke and dust that hangs over the area while private households set off thousands of dollars’ worth of personal explosives. Residents, including those with asthma and other breathing problems, have no choice but to breathe these toxins or try to avoid them by staying indoors. In the days afterward, the ground and waterfront, particularly Ediz Hook, are littered with the debris from fireworks. (Ediz Hook is supposed to be a reservation for native birds.) This onslaught of trash endangers the lives of seabirds and other wildlife, who mistake it for food.

Increasing Fire Hazard

The Olympic Peninsula is covered with trees, dense foliage, and wooden structures. In today’s climate conditions, by the time July 4 rolls around, the area is usually dry and hundreds of households setting off personal fireworks presents a clear and present fire danger. As the former fire chief stated during a community meeting, when July 4 comes, it’s time to “pray for rain.”

On July 6, 2025, reckless humans were setting off fireworks at “Party Rock,” near Lake Cushman. The result was the largest fire on the Olympic Peninsula since the Great Forks Fire in 1951. As of November 12, 2025, the Bear Gulch Fire had burned 20,233 acres. It doesn’t take a slew of formal studies to understand that many, if not most, fireworks parties are accompanied by increasing levels of careless abandon, fueled by alcohol and other drugs.

Danger to Persons and Property

Fireworks injuries in 2025 continued to be a significant safety concern, with data indicating a high volume of emergency room visits, particularly around Independence Day in the U.S. and the New Year period. Reports highlighted severe incidents, including a major California warehouse explosion, with injuries commonly involving burns, hand/finger injuries, and eye injuries.

Black Market Fireworks & Criminal Networks

A July 1, 2025, warehouse explosion in Esparto, California, killed seven people and injured two others. The warehouse was a storage location for black market fireworks. After the investigation, five people were charged with murder. The warehouse owner and others involved operated a suitably-named company, or smuggling operation, called "Devastating Pyrotechnics." The owner is the leader of a reported criminal network named Kenneth Chee.

Devastating Pyrotechnics and Chee have also been implicated in a number of other fireworks deaths. One prior episode occurred January 1, 2024, on Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay, when an 18-year-old boy was lighting off one of Chee's fireworks called "Northern Beast." The boy was decapitated.

A previous raid in Commerce, California related to the same company netted "half a million pounds of illegal explosives and fireworks." (Source: <https://www.capradio.org/articles/2026/04/21/prosecutors-allege-esparto-defendants-explosives-killed-others-before-and-after-july-blast/>).

It's unknown where Chee's fireworks and explosives came from, other than reported connections in Malaysia and China. It's unclear what kind of safety measures are taken by those who build them. It's also not clear how often black market fireworks make their way onto the neighborhood fireworks stand. What's clear is that Chee and others like him dealing with black market fireworks don't concern themselves with the well-being of their customers. Unfortunately, one could argue that the type of person who would buy black market fireworks may not be particularly concerned either. The danger is part of the "fun."

Creating a Mentality of Misbehavior

The City of Port Angeles has seen a number of troubling incidents over the years related to the use of personal fireworks. One man lost an eye to a mortar; another person was hit in the mouth with a mortar. Three more young men had minor to serious injuries caused by mortar use. One year, revelers blowing up fireworks burned down the Moose Lodge in Port Angeles. On another occasion, someone used fireworks to build a bomb that blew up about a dozen public toilets.

In the fall of 2025, one local motorist (the author of this document) barely escaped serious injury when a person or persons built an improvised explosive device (IED) using fireworks inserted into a full gas can made of plastic. The unknown persons lit a fuse and set the IED out in the street. As the motorist headed down I Street from the top of the hill at the 8th Street intersection, the device suddenly emitted a cloud of smoke that obscured the view. The driver stopped in the middle of the street. As the car came to a stop, the IED blew up not more than two or three feet from the stopped car. The explosion tore the plastic gas can into shreds and scattered debris across the area. Had the motorist stopped a couple feet further on, the explosion would have blown up right under the car. Neighbors called 911, as did the motorist, but there was no investigation.

The use of personal fireworks by individuals, especially family members and neighbors, tends to teach children, particularly young boys, that lighting things on fire and blowing things up is acceptable behavior. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), “[t]he majority of structure fires in homes caused by play were started by males (83%). Forty-three percent of the fires were started by a child under age 6. Older children were more likely to start outside fires, with two of five (38%) of all outside or unclassified fires started by a child between the ages of 10 and 12.”

Violations of Municipal and County Codes

As a society, we have good laws against public disturbances, explosions, smoke and other air pollution, littering, chemical and noise pollution, and the mistreatment and abuse of animals. These laws were adopted so that residents can co-exist peacefully. They represent the vital characteristics of a civilized community. Yet all these laws go out the window on and around Independence Day because of the use and abuse of personal fireworks. During these periods, numerous municipal, county and state codes are violated with impunity.

Some “Safe and Sane” Fireworks are Neither

A number of today’s personal fireworks differ drastically from the harmless little sparklers and snakes that many of us grew up with. Some residents are under the misapprehension that any sort of rocket or exploding firework is illegal in Washington State. That is not true. Some so-called “safe and sane” fireworks, or legal fireworks, are not much different from illegal fireworks. They include several varieties of airborne rocket that shoot high into the air and create concussions just as loud as illegal fireworks. People often bundle them together to create bigger explosions, such as sparkler bombs or the IED that was left on “I” street for the next hapless motorist. The terrorists in Boston used “safe and sane” fireworks to build the bombs that blew up at the Boston Marathon, killing three people and injuring 264.

Legal or “safe and sane” fireworks include the following:

- **Roman Candles.** A cardboard tube approximately one inch thick and one and a half feet long, filled with individual pyrotechnic charges, shells, or balls. They shoot 50 to 60 feet into the air.
- **Helicopters.** A spinner with wings. Once ignited a helicopter spins on the ground before it travels up into the air while shooting out sparks.
- **Tube Mines and Shells.** A large cardboard tube loaded with pyrotechnic charges. Shoots high into the air and explodes in one or more bursts.
- **Wheels.** Remains on the ground, spinning and shooting off a spray of sparks.
- **Combination Items.** A combination of one or more other fireworks.
- **Smoke Balls and Smoke Fountains.** Generates a thick cloud of colored smoke.

Key Fireworks Injury Trends and Data (2025)

July 4th Incidents: Dozens of injuries and deaths were reported across the U.S., with incidents involving illegal, unpermitted, and accidental detonations.

Most Common Injuries: Burns (37%), hands and fingers (36%), and head/face/ear injuries (22%) were the most frequent, according to post-July 4th data.

Demographics: Children under 15 and young adults (up to 24) made up a significant portion of injuries, with 60% of victims in this age range. Adults 25-44 accounted for 32% of injuries.

Dangerous Devices: Sparklers, often considered safe, were responsible for roughly 1,700 ER visits. Illegal fireworks and large aerial shells caused over half of all hospitalizations.

A National Fire Protection Association report points out a correlation between Fourth of July and a drastic increase in fire incidents in July: "Nearly one quarter of these fires (24%) were started during the month of July, likely influenced by fires during the July 4th holiday. Fireworks were the heat source in 30% of all non-trash outside or unclassified fires caused by fireplay, with lighters the heat source in 29% of the fires and matches the heat source in 20%." (Source: "Playing with Fire," National Fire Protection Association.)

National and Statewide Trend

More and more cities and counties across the nation have banned personal fireworks or are considering bans. This includes Clallam County's Olympic Peninsula neighbor, Jefferson County. Jefferson County passed the ban in 2023, citing increased fire danger to the Olympic Peninsula. Clallam County has just as much risk of a devastating Bear Gulch type of fire as Jefferson County. Most metropolitan areas, including Seattle, Olympia, Spokane, Bellingham, Port Angeles, Sequim, and Port Townsend do not allow personal fireworks. This means users need only step outside of city limits to carry on with fireworks explosions.

A Full Ban Should be Easier to Enforce

From a distance, it is virtually impossible to differentiate between these "safe and sane" fireworks and illegal fireworks, particularly if users are combining them. Banning all personal fireworks will solve this problem.

Response to Arguments Favoring Use of Personal Fireworks

Several arguments have been made about why the use of personal fireworks should be allowed to continue despite the many objections, including benefits to non-profits who operate fireworks stands, the expression of patriotism, and free speech. Each of these is discussed below.

Concern for Well-Being of Non-Profits

Some have expressed concern about possible negative impacts on non-profits who operate fireworks stands to raise funds. There is no evidence that non-profits will disappear or otherwise fail if they are compelled to find alternate funding sources. Providing an easy source of funding for a select group, at the expense of county residents and City coffers, is not a valid reason to continue allowing the use and abuse of personal fireworks. While the City or volunteer citizens are obliged to clean up the post-fireworks party messes, there is

no public information indicating that the operators of fireworks stands participate in these cleanups. The mess left behind annually on Ediz Hook is a fine example of the mess left behind by partiers on July 4. This litter is invariably cleaned up by environmentally-minded volunteers. Trying to clean up the fireworks chemicals and debris that hit the water in the harbor is a non-starter.

The Mythology of Personal Fireworks Equated with Patriotism

Some defend the use of personal fireworks by citing a historical call by President John Adams to celebrate Independence Day with "...illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other..." However, nowhere does John Adams call for individual citizens to blow up explosives. Instead, the first celebration was described as a "grand exhibition of fireworks..." which took place "on the Commons," not in every citizen's front yard. The *Philadelphia Evening Post* wrote that "Everything was conducted with the greatest order and decorum, and the face of joy and gladness was universal." (Source: "The Rockets' Red, White, and Blue Glare: How did fireworks become America's Fourth of July pastime?" Slate Magazine.)

"Order and decorum" and "universal gladness" are a far cry from the mayhem and resentment that grips Clallam County due to neighborhood fireworks parties blasting on into the night while other citizens are told to "deal with it" and to not "pester" the police. There is no evidence that those who blow up fireworks more patriotic than those who stay indoors trying to calm their pets and avoiding the smoke. In a significant number of cases, this cry of patriotism has become nothing more than a shabby excuse for anti-social behavior.

As one Port Angeles resident eloquently stated in a Port Angeles City Council meeting: "I suspect you may have concerns about angering people who love their fireworks, some of whom will tell you it's unpatriotic to restrict them. But I don't know what's patriotic about terrifying neighbors and their pets, endangering others' property and health, creating all sorts of pollution and litter, and making sure that many in town can't get a decent night's sleep for days."

"Patriotic" proponents of personal fireworks should be disappointed to learn that the vast majority of personal-grade fireworks purchased in the USA are manufactured overseas, primarily in China. Fireworks manufacturers in India and Guatemala are notorious for using child labor. On the other hand, most fireworks used in public displays, called display fireworks, are manufactured in the USA.

"Free Speech" Vs. Public Safety

Some have argued that setting off personal fireworks is a matter of free speech. It's not clear how loud explosions and smoke bombs constitute "speech."

Public Opinion in Clallam County

Appendix A shows some sample comments from online sites such as Facebook and PDN fireworks-related articles (back when the PDN allowed comments). We feel these samples are important, particularly those against a ban, as some of them demonstrate the lack of neighborly concern that exacerbates the personal fireworks problem. These include sentiments such as “boo freaking hoo,” “You people make me sick,” and “Try Seattle they shoot people over there.” In a very intrusive way, the legality of personal fireworks gives this type of individual free rein to impose their spiteful attitudes on their neighbors.

Conclusion

We feel that we represent a “quiet majority” of county residents who are fed up with the mayhem that grips Clallam County on July 4th and surrounding days. We recognize that others in the county enjoy setting off fireworks. We argue that their explosions and smoke impinge much more aggressively on our right to a peaceful and safe holiday than our objections impinge on their ability to celebrate the Fourth of July. Those who love fireworks can still enjoy a beautiful public display sponsored by local towns and businesses. In time, as attitudes shift, perhaps those who currently have to stay home to calm terrified pets or guard their property might also be able to head into town and enjoy a community celebration.

Appendices

Appendix A: Public Comments

Note: Errors left intact.

Comments Favoring a Ban

Recent comments from county residents:

Up on Monroe Rd one year there were four horses running full speed going downhill. I saw them at dusk. They were all caught the next morning but two of them had horrible asphalt burns on their legs from falling. Up on the roads south of 101 the booms sound like bombs going off. They aren't fireworks. How are we gonna stop them? --Roxanne Talltree Douglas

I have ten sanctuary horses-blind pony, deaf horse-minis, donkeys, standards. So speaking as RainShadow Equine Sanctuary Team, we here on the farm, hate the noise and lights. The illegals are the worse. For a week our horses have to be stalled, so they don't get hurt running from the noise and lights. Running through hot wire-hitting on the fencing. Going through a locked gate. It's not just the spooking-it's the fireworks shooting into the property. It's all times of the day. Our goats and chickens won't be buying any fireworks with their egg money! Said hate-I hate them! --Debra Pavlich-Boaz

One horse ran through my fence then couldn't stop running. Have to sedate horses every year to prevent injury but it's difficult to find a safe haven for them away from all the explosions. This year had to bring 2 horses inside an enclosed arena that had never been together and hope they didn't hurt each other. We can't leave our animals on July 4 or Dec 31 as we're on "watch duty". --Jack Reagan

I've been fortunate to not have had animals that are bothered by fireworks and gunshots. Our horses and cows were fine as well.

But my son has ptsd from the Iraq War 20 years ago and the fireworks and gunfire affects him. He leaves during the 4th holiday for peace and quiet. --TraceyLee Hutto Grooms

God I can't keep having these fireworks happen all around us. Our poor dogs have literally almost died,

One started ripping up carpet and curtains (when we stepped out) and had to have emergency surgery to unblock her stomach a few years ago right after the 4th.

We were up until 3am this new years eve with absolute bomb like fire works going off next door starting at 6pm. It's absolutely ridiculous. --Emily Crane

My good ex was a veteran, and his PTSD would be so bad during fireworks on Independence day and New Year's Eve that he would have to go to the emergency room. This past New Year's, I had to blast Spotify and sleep on the bathroom floor with my Pittie until 2am. My ranch is up off of Blue Mountain Rd., about five miles from HW101. Nobody in my area was blasting fireworks, yet the booms from down in town were horrific!!!! This shit has to stop NOW!!!!!! -- Kari Payne

My friend spent New Year's morning cleaning her dog and his kennel after he lost his bowels from fright and spread it all over himself and the kennel in his efforts to escape. That was how loud it was in her neighborhood from inside her house with plenty of white noise trying to cover it. --Brenda McAlice

We've had our share of terrified pets over the years, but animals aren't the only ones traumatized. Our son served in Afghanistan and came home with PTSD. He and his wife drive to the middle of nowhere on NY Eve and July 4 to try and get away from the loud noises that sound exactly like gunshots. There are many veterans who have the same reaction. --Pat Resende

My 2 aussies have to be medicated, which doesn't seem to help. My next door neighbor lit fireworks at 11 pm NYE and my poor dogs were so traumatized. One tries to crawl under my skin and is trembling like a leaf. The other one is digging in my closet to hide in my clothes. I play rain sounds, blinds shut, bedroom door shut, and just try to talk calmly to them. I can't get the dogs out to pee, so they hold it until about 3 am. So for my neighbor to have 10 minutes of fun, my dogs and I are trashed for 8 hours. Unbelievable!!! --Susan Kay

From 2016, during Port Angeles ban debate:

"I say ban them all together. Let the professionals put on the show. It breaks my heart what fear and anxiety in puts in our four legged family members. So many pets are terrorized. They hide, they shake, they don't eat, they run away. I would sign a petition to ban them. But like so many other things, it's all about the money."

"I think they should be banned. People do not follow the law. In my neighborhood it was ridiculous. People who work had to try to sleep for the week before and several days after with loud fireworks going off. Ban them! I did not notice any enforcement either. I live in the City and think that too many people have done what they wanted with no consequence. Have a City fireworks display. But my vote is to ban resident fireworks! If the City will not enforce the law then it is time to ban them."

"I am totally in support of banning them! This year was horrible for our pets who were terrorized by the super loud ones that went on and on and on well past midnight."

Comments Opposing a Ban

"So a bunch of sad over the hill people want to ban Fireworks on the fourth of July. Amazing that there all going to have meeting at the Library. I would encourage that the 4th of July be expanded to two days of non stop buzz bombs, sky rockets, mortar shells and a competition open to everyone yearly. Say at Editz Hook. Can yo imagine several firewprks companies giving a free shop to test their products. Take the fourth to a New Level. Independence Day where thousands come to shoot fireworks and enjoy the displays and vendors."

Jan Butler go on vacation on the 4th of July. Try Seattle they shoot people over there"

"yes and we see how well people follow the rules now.... police will just have to drive around like crazy and give out all sorts of unneeded tickets. give your dog benadryl it will calm them just fine to make it through the celebrations..."

"ITS ONE DAY OUT OF THE YEAR!!! You people make me sick, always whining and crying about something. This is the ONE day out of 365 that America celebrates its freedom and the day we declared independence. I am a veteran and I have pets, plus I had to go to work just like everyone else. You all know when the 4th of July is, prepare for it. You think they were too loud this year? just wait until you ban them! Put your pets in a crate, buy some ear plugs and a redbull for the morning."

Give me a break... its one night a year that port angeles is loud boo freaking hoo!! Let people enjoy the day, its not like you didnt know this day was coming!! The laws now are fair and all because we had one "bad" year doesnt mean we should ban them all together!! And as far as pets go.. vets provide medication to give animals to keep them calm, so quit blaming everyone else because you weren't prepared.. we might as well ban the whole damn holiday while were at it.. and whats even more disappointing is this article fails to mention how a member of our military was seriously injured that night! We should focus on what is really causing our city to become unsafe.. like all the theifs and meth addicts."

Comments Suggesting More Restrictions

"Let's empty out and open up the hospital parking lot for the kids on the 4th. Oh and plant a fire truck right in the middle of the lot! Seriously I think fire works after midnight should be banned and ticketed. If a few parents receive a 100 dollar ticket because their unsupervised children are shooting off large loud fireworks on the 5th of July they might be more inclined to put the kids to bed at a reasonable hour."

Appendix B: The Original Steering Committee's Work

Hundreds of hours of work went into researching and developing this document. This includes:

- Many dozens of phone calls to officials in other cities, mostly in the State of Washington. This includes conversations with officials from Port Angeles' 15 comparison city list.
- Interviews with officials from cities who have considered or enacted a ban on personal fireworks, and the collection of documentation from these and other officials.
- Requests for data from the City of Port Angeles and other cities, including information about the role of non-profit fireworks stands and the cost of clean-up, repairs, police and fire responses, and hospital expenses for uninsured victims.
- Talking to residents and analyzing public comments made online about the impact of fireworks on homes, farms and ranches in the county.
- Discussions with officials from National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and their affiliates, specifically pertaining to their Alliance to Stop Consumer Fireworks. The 23 organizations participating in this group include American Burn Association, The American Academy of Ophthalmology, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, and many others.
- Analysis of data on PTSD among veterans, provided by the National Center for PTSD, of the US Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Analysis of Washington State laws on fireworks, provided by the State Highway Patrol's "Fireworks Ban or Restricted Sales/Use."
- Analysis of the Washington State Fire Marshal's yearly report, called "2013 Injury and Fire Report." The 2014 report will be available in February 2015.
- Research on the history of fireworks in the United States.
- Research on addiction to fireworks and arson studies.
- Research on injuries and deaths caused by the use of personal fireworks.
- Research on the effects of fireworks on the young and elderly, specifically regarding air pollution and lung and cardio problems.
- Research on water pollution, including "Fireworks Pollutant Detection Pilot Study for Lake Shoecraft and Mongo Pond," provided by the Snohomish County Public Works department.
- Research on air pollution, provided by Gary Palcisko, the air quality toxicologist with the Washington State Department of Ecology. Mr. Palcisko provided numerous

graphs detailing spikes in air pollution in numerous western Washington cities on and around the 4th of July. Also, the article "Cheap Thrills with Toxic Consequences," published by backcountry.com. Also articles about air pollution in Shanghai, which has banned personal fireworks, and other Chinese cities that have air pollution issues exacerbated by fireworks.

- A study from "Legal Planet" about the effects of fireworks on the environment.
- The Washington State Department of Wildlife's bird biologist referred the group to Professor John Marzluff at University of Washington. He provided information about the effects of fireworks on federally-protected birds in our neighborhoods.
- Extensive conversations with the US Department of Consumer Affairs concerning fireworks and their hazards and injuries.
- Research into safe, family-friendly alternatives to the use of personal fireworks.
- Research into the experience of many other cities who have implemented a fireworks ban, with emphasis on Spokane, Tukwila, Mill Creek, and Kenmore.
- Research into data about the social degradation of neighborhoods caused by the use of personal fireworks. Details can be found in the "The Grand Jury Study: The Anatomy of Safe and Sane Fireworks Sales in Orange County."
- Research into the role of non-profits in bringing personal fireworks into communities. Details can be found in the "The Grand Jury Study: The Anatomy of Safe and Sane Fireworks Sales in Orange County."
- Numerous newspaper articles found on the internet about the use and abuse of personal fireworks nationwide.
- Investigation into the source of personal fireworks in our state, The Washington Independence Day Association. This organization represents companies who manufacture explosives. They have fireworks lobbyists and had a hand in creating our fireworks laws (or lack thereof).
- Research into the dangers caused by the use of sparkler bombs, tennis ball bombs, flying lanterns, and exploding targets.
- Research into the many safety issues related to children's access to fireworks.
- Research into the municipal and state codes that are being violated by the use of personal fireworks.

BOCC Mail Correspondences Received from other Jurisdictions

From the Desk of Ron Erickson

RECEIVED
CLALLAM CO. COMMISSIONERS

MAY 15 2026

1...2...3...A...

May 15, 2026

To: County Administrator, County Commissioners, and HR Director.

Subject: **Proposal for Voluntary Retirement Benefit Conversion Program (County Relief Program)**

Dear Commissioners,

I am submitting the attached proposal for a **Voluntary Retirement Benefit Conversion Program**, designed to provide immediate budget relief to the County while offering retirees a valuable estate-planning and Medicaid-protection option.

This program is **entirely voluntary, cost-neutral, and IRS-compliant**. It allows retirees to restructure their pension into a 50/50 split — half paid during life, half paid to their heirs after death — without reducing the total lifetime benefit.

The County gains short-term fiscal stability and long-term liability smoothing. Retirees gain lower attachable income, improved estate outcomes, and tax-timing advantages.

The program can also be **reopened in future years** or offered to new retirees at the time of retirement, making it a flexible tool for managing budget pressures.

I appreciate your time and consideration and would be glad to discuss this further.

Sincerely,



Ronald Erickson

Port Angeles, WA



Voluntary Retirement Benefit Conversion Program (County Relief Program)

Prepared by: Ronald Erickson

Date: May 2026

A. Purpose

To provide immediate and long-term budget relief to the County while offering retirees a voluntary, IRS-compliant benefit option that improves estate outcomes, reduces Medicaid exposure, and preserves total lifetime benefit value.

B. Program Summary

The County will open a **90-day voluntary enrollment window** allowing retirees to convert their pension into a **50/50 split**:

- **50% paid monthly during the retiree's lifetime**
- **50% paid monthly to the retiree's beneficiary after death**

Total lifetime benefit remains unchanged.

C. County Advantages

1. Immediate Cash-Flow Relief

Reduces current-year pension outflow.

2. Improved Actuarial Stability

Lowers short-term liabilities and smooths long-term obligations.

3. Present-Value Savings

Deferred dollars cost less in today's terms.

4. Voluntary = No Union Conflict

No renegotiation required.

D. Retiree Advantages

1. Medicaid / Nursing-Home Protection

Only the 50% received during life counts as income.

2. Estate Benefit

Heirs receive a monthly income stream after death.

3. Tax Timing Advantage

Lower taxable income now; heirs often taxed at a lower bracket.

4. No Loss of Total Value

Same lifetime benefit, different timing.

E. Future Reopening

The County may:

- Reopen the program during future budget stress
- Offer it to new retirees at the time of retirement
- Use it as a long-term fiscal stabilizer

This flexibility makes the program a **standing fiscal tool**.

F. Optional Future Tiers (25%, 75%, 90%)

To ensure fairness:

- The initial offering is **50/50 only**
- Additional tiers (25%, 75%, 90%) may be added later
- Any new tier must be offered **equally to all retirees**, not just new ones

This prevents inequity between earlier and later retirees.

G. Implementation Steps

1. County adopts a simple resolution authorizing the program.
2. HR sends enrollment packets to retirees.
3. 90-day enrollment window opens.
4. County hosts a **Retiree Appreciation Dinner** for participants.
5. Conversions begin next fiscal quarter.

H. Conclusion

This program is a **win-win**:

- Retirees gain protection and estate benefits
- The County gains immediate and long-term fiscal relief

- No one loses value
- Participation is voluntary
- The program can be reused whenever needed

I. Recommended Action

Approve the program and authorize HR to begin the 90-day enrollment window.