

To: Port Commissioners: Shepard, Bell, and Briscoe
Director Env and Planning: Gouran
Port of Bellingham
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29 Jan 2025

RE: Comments on the proposed new tenant for waterfront property: Granite Construction

Dear Mr. Shepard, Mr. Bell, Mr. Briscoe, and Mr. Gouran,

We are writing to follow-up on a discussion we had with Mr. Shepard and Mr. Gouran on Dec 17 regarding the possible lease given to Granite Construction on Port owned waterfront property. We appreciate that the Port reached out to RE Sources and has provided us and the community with information about this industry and anticipated impacts. We also appreciate the extra efforts that the Port has performed to investigate the various impacts that this industry may have on the waterfront and surrounding community. We have specific questions outlined below that we would like to have answered before a final decision is made.

RE Sources is a non-profit organization located in northwest Washington and founded in 1982. We mobilize people in Northwest Washington to build just and thriving communities and to protect the land, water and climate on which we all depend. Our priority programs include Protecting the Salish Sea, Freshwater Restoration, Climate Action, and Fighting Pollution—all critical issues affecting our region. Our North Sound Baykeeper is also a member of the Waterkeeper Alliance, with over 300 organizations in 34 countries around the world that promote fishable, swimmable, drinkable water. RE Sources has thousands of supporters in Whatcom, Skagit, and San Juan counties, and we submit these comments on their behalf.

Based on our meeting and the information presented at the Dec 17 Port meeting, truck traffic is our biggest concern. It was mentioned that there would be 25-50 truck trips per day, not including trips from the public purchasing pea gravel and other types of rock. We would like some clarity on this amount. Is this 25-50 round trips per day or single trips? Meaning, the worst case scenario, could there be 50-100 trucks passing through downtown Bellingham per day? In a given 12 hour period, this would mean a truck goes through Bellingham every 7-15 minutes.

A lot of effort has gone into making downtown Bellingham more biker and pedestrian friendly and having this amount of large, presumably diesel trucks, traversing the city is at odds with these efforts. Adding congestion to the downtown core will further discourage people from biking and will make being in downtown and the waterfront less inviting. We don't think this is what the community has in mind for a revitalized downtown and waterfront districts. We have reached out to various community partners and they also express concern about the truck traffic. ***Could you please provide clarity on the number of truck trips that will be going through downtown Bellingham and what the anticipated routes will be?***

Stormwater pollution, especially turbidity and petroleum, are also concerns. The Granite Construction operation in Vancouver, WA has 20 Oil & Grease exceedances since Jan 2022. ***How will this operation differ from the one in Vancouver to prevent the release of contaminants that could end up in Bellingham Bay?*** And having 3 barges per month traverse the sensitive marine habitats between here and Vancouver Island are also not ideal. ***Would the 3 barges coming to Bellingham be additional barge traffic or are these barges already going to different facilities?***

Coast Salish Tribal consultation is also an important step in developing and managing the waterfront. ***We would also like to know if you have had conversations with the Lummi Nation and the Nooksack tribe about this proposal?*** If so, did they express any concerns with the Port and were their thoughts taken into consideration?

While Granite Construction appears to be less impactful than the disastrous ABC recyclers, we wonder if we could do even better? Could we have an industry that checks *all* the boxes, not just most of the boxes? Can we have a tenant that does not rely so heavily on fossil fuels from cradle to grave and will not add to environmental degradation and community conflicts? We think so! With a relatively short 5-term lease for this project this is an opportunity for the Port to work with the community, tribes and other stakeholders, to outline other options for this space in the short and long term.

Thank you again for sharing information about this endeavor and allowing the public to weigh in. We hope you will consider our comments and other community members' comments before making a final decision. RE Sources hopes to continue our ongoing collaboration with the Port of Bellingham as we value this relationship.

Sincerely,

Ander Russell
Co-Executive Director

Kirsten McDade
North Sound Waterkeeper