



July 2026

ELMA'S Community Connection

Your Hook-Up on Information From City Hall

From the desk of Mayor Josh Collette ♦ mayor@cityofelma.com ♦ 360-470-3984

You Spoke; We Are Listening: Newsletter Delivery Feedback

Earlier this year, the City invited feedback on whether the *Elma Community Connection* newsletter should transition to be shared exclusively on our website. We received a strong and thoughtful response from residents, and we appreciate everyone who took the time to share their perspective.



A clear theme emerged: many residents value receiving the printed newsletter with their utility bill and rely on that physical copy as a consistent reminder to stay informed. Several noted that while they are capable of accessing information online, they are less likely to regularly visit the City's website or read a multi-page document on a phone or computer. Others emphasized that a print version remains especially important for older residents or those who do not use social media or digital platforms regularly.

At the same time, community members recognized the need to manage costs and improve the timeliness of communication. Suggestions included using text notification systems, enhancing website visibility, or exploring a hybrid approach that combines print with digital updates on a monthly basis.

Based on this feedback, the City will keep looking for ways to make information clearer and reach as many residents as possible. We will continue sending out printed newsletters with the utility bills, and we will also try to share the information in other ways. As part of this effort, we are working to identify key community spots to make copies of the newsletter available to the public. We had already made copies available at City Hall, and we have expanded availability to Dennis Company and Thriftway in recent months. We will work on finding other key locations where more people can see and access the newsletter.

Our goal remains simple: make it easy for residents to stay informed in the way that works best for them. We will continue to review options and welcome ongoing community input as we refine our approach.

Our Mission: The City of Elma proudly promotes a healthy, safe, welcoming and vibrant community. We are dedicated to delivering excellent services and engaging in meaningful and accessible public participation.

Our Vision: Elma is a caring community where everyone belongs. People live, work, play, worship, and raise their families here. It is a place of economic opportunity, with an independent spirit and unique identity.

Small Town, Big Story: Elma's Place in America's 250th

As our country gets ready to celebrate 250 years since the Declaration of Independence, towns and communities all across the U.S. are thinking about how local stories, like Elma's, fit into the bigger American story. From its earliest days, Elma has shown qualities like resilience, hard work, and a strong sense of community and values that helped shape the nation.

Long before Elma was established, the Chehalis River Valley was home to Indigenous peoples, including the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation. The river was important for providing food, helping with travel, and keeping people connected—roles it still plays today as settlers arrived.

Elma's modern story began in 1853 when early settlers such as D.F. Byles, James Waldrup, and others arrived in the Chehalis River Valley, hoping to find new opportunities. They were attracted by fertile farmland and plenty of available timber during a time when the United States was still young and expanding westward. Just a few decades after the country's founding, these pioneers moved west, showing the same determination and vision that marked America's early growth.

Because it was near the Chehalis River and early roads, Elma soon became a hub for farms and logging businesses in eastern Grays Harbor County. These industries formed the backbone of the local economy, with families, workers, and business owners making their living from the land. They did not just shape Elma's growth; they also told a bigger American story of hard work, ingenuity, and coming together as a community.

When the railroad came to Elma in the late 1800s, everything changed for the town. The train connected Elma to bigger cities and markets, helping it grow faster and making it easier to send out timber and farm products. Logging became one of the main industries in the area. Workers cut down trees in nearby forests and used steam-powered winches called steam donkeys to move the huge logs. These machines became a well-known symbol of the logging history in the Pacific Northwest. At the same time, farms in the Chehalis Valley grew crops, raised animals, and produced dairy, supporting local families and markets across the region.



Elma was officially incorporated on March 22, 1888, more than a year before Washington became a state. Elma's incorporation came during a period when many small towns across the American West were formalizing local governments, bringing structure, services, and a stronger civic identity to growing communities.



Washington State's **America 250** initiative is the official state-level commemoration of the United States' 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2026. The City of Elma, like other municipalities across Washington, is engaging with the America 250 WA effort by joining as a partner community to connect its residents with the statewide celebration. The program includes curated history content, statewide events, educational activities, and key commemorative dates such as the Day of Service, Independence Day celebrations, Museum Day, and a Day of Civic Engagement.

To learn more about this initiative, you can visit <https://america250wa.org/>.



As Elma grew, its schools and community places also expanded, and many of these are still important parts of everyday life today. The small, one-room schoolhouses of the past eventually grew into a big, organized public school system, which is now known as the Elma School District. Schools became more than just places to learn; they became social hubs where people gathered and built a sense of community. Churches, local clubs, and volunteer groups also played a big role in creating a strong community spirit that continues today. In 1886, Elma became the location of the first Chehalis County Fair, where local farmers have a place to share techniques, display livestock, and build community connections that still endure today.

The name "Elma" has several stories about where it came from. One story, shared by Florence Waldrip Taylor, says that early settlers chose the name when they were setting up a post office. They were inspired by a name James Waldrip saw in a book. Another story says it was named after Elma Austin, a family member who settled near the Chehalis River before 1860. Yet another story credits the name to Elmira Hunter, a well-respected person from Hunter's Prairie. A different idea is that it was named after Elmer E. Ellsworth, the first soldier to die in the Civil War, but his first name was shortened by post office workers. Yet another story says two local residents suggested the name Elmira when setting up the post office, and postal officials shortened it to Elma because there was already a town called Almira in the state. No matter which story is true, everyone agrees that the name Elma suits this friendly little town perfectly.

Today, organizations like the Chehalis Valley Historical Society work to keep stories like these alive. They have collections of photos, artifacts, and records that show what daily life was like in early Elma, from logging camps and schools to family farms. You can learn more by visiting their museums in person or by checking out their website at cvhsmuseum.org. Their work helps us remember and celebrate important moments, like America's 250th birthday, while staying connected to the people and events that shaped our local community.



*Fourth of July Parade on Main Street in Elma, 1901
(Courtesy of Chehalis Valley Historical Society)*

Community celebrations have long been a part of Elma's story. In the early 1900s, Fourth of July festivities brought residents together for parades along Main Street, baseball games, and shared meals. These traditions fostered a sense of unity and pride that continues today with events such as the Spodyfest 4th of July Convoy.

Elma's history is all about the connection to the land, to each other, and to the larger American story. The town reflects the lasting values that have helped shape the United States over the past 250 years. As we look to the future, we do so with a greater understanding of our past, and a shared dedication to what's ahead.



Celebrate our nation's 250th birthday by exploring the many interesting historical and cultural museums throughout Grays Harbor County.

You can get your official passport either at the Chehalis Valley Historical Museum in Montesano or at the McCleary Museum and Event Center.

Don't forget to stop by the exhibit at Elma City Hall and have your passport stamped at the front desk during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, from 8 AM to 4 PM.



Community Events

Friday, July 4, 2026

Spodyfest 4th of July Convoy
New 4th of July Parade for Elma
 Staging at the EHS parking lot at 12 PM
 with the parade starting at 1 PM

July 10, 2026 — July 12, 2026



Saturday, July 26, 2026

Ride the Harbor: Tour De Wellness
Summit Pacific Medical Foundation

July 29, 2026—August 1, 2026



Grays Harbor County Fair

July 31, 2026 - August 1, 2026

*Heat on the Street - Street Dance &
 Car and Motorcycle Show*
Elma Chamber of Commerce

Tuesday, August 4, 2026

National Night Out
Smith Murrey Park
Elma Police Department

Saturday, August 8, 2026

Washington Museum Day
Washington State America's 250th

Wednesday, September 2, 2026

First Day of School
Elma School District



CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

Elma City Hall at 6:00 PM
 202 W. Main St. Elma, WA

July 20, 2026
 July 27, 2026
(Council work Session)

August 3, 2026
 August 17, 2026
 August 24, 2026
(Council work Session)

The agenda and link to ZOOM meeting are available on the city's website www.cityofelma.com

City of Elma 2025 Consumer Confidence Report



The City of Elma's annual *Consumer Confidence Report* (CCR) is now available on our website. This report summarizes the results of water quality monitoring through December of last year. The CCR also offers essential information regarding your drinking water quality. This includes specifying where the water comes from, what it contains, and how it meets federal and state water quality standards.

We encourage all water system users to review the report. Transparency in water quality is essential for public health, and the CCR is a key tool in helping residents stay informed and confident in the safety of their drinking water. <https://www.cityofelma.com/public-works/page/water-and-sewer>