

# **Birch Bay Incorporation Association**

## **Annual General Meeting & Steering Committee Election Minutes**

November 15, 2023

Called to order at 5:35pm

- Welcome from Matt Berry – opening remarks with quote from JFK
  - Hoping all will assume a positive and respectful attitude during this process.
  - [Video shown as a presentation showing City v. County](#) – describing the difference between a city and a county. City is organized and run by the citizens, while a county seat is an administrative subdivision of the state
  - Taxes do not necessarily need to increase, they just get moved from the county to the city government.
  - Goal of this meeting is to Adopt a set of By-laws, Research the feasibility of incorporation and identify benefits and costs.
  - Meetings began in June and have been held every month.
  - This group was sent up to allow representation of the community as a whole, and to allow everyone to have a voice even if ineligible to vote. Trying to allow everyone to have a say.
  - 2008 feasibility study that was done showed the area was financially viable at that time.
  - Population:
    - 31 years ago at the time of the initial incorporation attempt was 3000 residents
    - In 2008 there were 5,900 residents
    - In 2023 there are 8,900 residents
    - In 2036 Whatcom County Comprehensive plan projects there will be 12,000 residents which will be a higher density than Ferndale is currently
    - Birch Bay has been designated as an Urban Growth Area by the County- An Urban Growth Area is an area that the County is encouraging growth and incorporation. The area encompasses 5.63 square miles.
    - The uniqueness of Birch Bay as an Urban Growth Area is that it is not attached to a City as most Urban Growth areas are.
    - The Median age in Birch Bay is beginning to decline and there are many more kids. 75% of the kids in the Blaine school district live in Birch Bay. 60% of the Teens in the Blaine school district live in Birch Bay.
    - Airbnbs have changed the landscape with 286 short term rentals and about \$7.3 million dollars in revenue coming in
    - There are about 15,000 people in town on a good weekend with visitors
  - It has been 20 years since a new city has incorporated in the State of Washington, and 90 plus years since a new city incorporated in Whatcom County.
  - Responses to the initial survey numbered 641 with 55% stating they did not want to annex to Blaine and 53% percent stating wanting to incorporate.
  - How will incorporation benefit the community?
    - There would be decision making autonomy
    - There would be local representation

- Provide a stronger community identity
    - Provide the ability to decide land use and infrastructure planning
  - Concerns are:
    - Costs
    - Timelines
  - Have done a lot of research to this point and gotten some great information from the county.
  - Property tax valuation is 2.2 billion dollars roughly a quarter millions dollars per person
    - This is higher than Lynden, Ferndale, Sumas
- Jonathan Mallahan: pulled figures from other cities to provide an example of what tax numbers could look like. Each city has its own characteristics, and each model has limitations based on extrapolated information.
  - If using the numbers from 2008 and use the current inflation rates we are financially viable
  - County will always provide certain services to the city as they do with other cities. The City will decide which services they want to keep with the county and which ones to bring in house.
- Matt: It is very likely that Birch Bay already generates enough revenue for basic services
  - Birch Bay is relatively dense in population compared to other cities of a similar size, this helps to keep costs tighter.
  - It is not inconceivable that current taxes would support Birch Bay as a city
  - 10% of the registered voters would have to sign a petition for the Review Board to initiate a Feasibility study. This process takes one year to complete.
  - At this time a Steering committee would research and review all pertinent information to present to the public to see if there was enough interest to take it to the Review Board. The county pays for the feasibility study.
  - Whatcom County is committed to helping Urban Growth areas become cities and they have already designated Birch Bay as an Urban Growth area.
- Cath Urban: asking why if including as many people as possible this meeting was not held next summer?
  - Matt: It was explained that the meeting began last June and have reached the point of next steps, such as research.
- Ruthy Danielson: What are the proposed boundaries?
  - Matt: It was explained that part of the meeting tonight is to set those boundaries. That these boundaries are just preliminary and could be adjusted through the process as other communities expressed interest in being part of the incorporation process.
- Cynthia: Were mailings sent out to public?
  - Matt: Answer that there was a mailing sent out to a couple of outlying communities outside of the urban growth boundaries, but that social media, newspaper, and website were the most widely used form of getting information out to the public. These avenues were used each month in advance of the meetings as well as the emails of everyone from the initial survey and anyone who signed up at meetings.
- Jane Zimmerman: Why is Birch Bay View not included in the North boundary?

- Matt: Answer is the decision was made to start with the UGA Boundaries as a starting point
- Jennifer: What is the possibility of a new feasibility study?
  - Matt: Answer is that it is possible and would be provided by the County if a need was seen.
- Jacob: gentleman did a nation search re: rural v city and what happens on the coasts are better however ownerships of homes go down, crime goes up, homelessness goes up and dissatisfaction goes up in a city.
- Dave Berry: Who has higher levy rate, us or Blaine?
  - Birch Bay at 7.92%
  - Blaine 7.73%
  - And no representation on the County Council
- Steve Nelson: All of us are here because we like Birch Bay. 50 years ago the Sewer system came into being. Growth is happening. But we need better data.
- Vote to adopt bylaws and form BBIA
  - Most of the room voted yes, six in the back for no.
  - With a representative group maybe we can get some help from the county
  - The Priorities of the group are transparency, inclusivity, legitimacy, critical and analytical approach to researching feasibility.
- Sam: will the feasibility provide more than the less than 6% of the original survey?
- Audience asked: About amount of time to review the candidates
  - Matt: Candidate information was sent out 2 weeks prior to the meeting and they will speak tonight
- Section 3 no business registered
- Whether candidates were here
  - YES, They are here
- Question: Who could vote?
  - Matt: Voters were registered members who live, work or own business(s) in Birch Bay
- Question: Why voting today?
  - Matt: As meeting have been going on for 6 months it was time to move forward
- Question: Was Cherry point included?
  - Matt: No, Cherry Point is part of BP and the Comprehensive Plan has a policy restricting its inclusion within our proposed boundaries.
- Question: Are there any nominations for the steering committee that were skeptical?
  - A show of hands indicates, yes.
- Question: Number of meetings held?
  - Matt: 6 – As meeting have been going on for 6 months it was time to move forward
- Question: Average number of attendees to each meeting?
  - Matt: 30-40
- Question: What is the term length of the committee?
  - Matt: 1 year
- Question: Will Birch Bay State Park become a city park?
  - Matt: No, it will remain a state park just as county parks would remain county parks
  - Reservation taxes would go to the city instead of the county though

- Question: What is the difference between the Steering Committee and the Association?
  - Matt: Big decisions are made by the Association. The Steering committee is elected from the association and works on the strategy and researching to bring information back to the association.
  - There will be monthly meeting of the steering committee and quarterly meeting of the Association unless a special meeting is called
  - Will be held to the same standards as the County Council
- Matt: Can we have a motion to adopt By-laws?
  - Vote taken – Passed (5 opposed)
- Motion to ratify preliminary boundaries as the UGA boundaries – these can be changed as communities wish to be added or removed. At this time the response from outlying communities has been mostly negative.
- Matt: Motion to adopt the preliminary boundaries
  - Pat Alesse seconded the motion.
  - Voted and approved
- Election to begin of Steering Committee members – not less than 7 and not more than 15. Mark and turn into election certification group at table in front.
  - Ballots were certified and counted by Former Neighborhood Deputy/Detective Derek Jones, Dianne Marrs-Smith (FoBBL), Doralee Booth (FoBBL/Chamber of Commerce), and Danielle Gaughen (Chamber of Commerce)
- Candidates: each gave a 60 second introduction before the voting began
- Candidates & statements can be read here:
  - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UIXqF5jfV1X-vAkbcBIKJOSli7utPQV5/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=101392891683005540155&rtpof=true&sd=true>
- 7:02 PM voting begins, ballots left with certifiers to tally
- A thank you was made to Matt for running the meeting and keeping things flowing smoothly

7:06 PM meeting adjourned