

Birch Bay Incorporation Association
Quarterly Public Meeting Minutes
February 15, 2024

1) Call to Order & Introduction: The meeting was called to order at 6:05 by Matt Berry.

2) Steering Committee Roll Call:

a) Members Present Matt Berry Lisa Guthrie Sharman Burnam Michael Stringham Brian Bell, Chuck Kinzer Caprice Pine Jonathan Mallahan, Cecil Robinson, Jason Calvirari, Wayne

b) Members Absent Barny Yorkston, Bob

3) Approval of Minutes:

a) Caprice Pine made a motion to adopt the December BBIA steering committee minutes as amended, Chuck Kinzer seconded the motion and the motion passed with unanimous support (12-0-0)

4) Executive Committee Report: Matt Berry Provided an update on behalf of the Executive Committee.

a) Matt made a request for volunteers to be the BBIA secretary and asked that interested individuals reach out to him directly.

b) Sharman Burnam Treasurer – Provided an update on the designation of Birch Bay Incorporation Association per IRS rules. The IRS is considered an association that can collect donations that are non-tax deductible.

c) Matt Berry posed a question to the audience: Do you want to be involved or feel you missed out, you are invited to join BBIA committees. All are welcome to add their talents and perspectives to our work.

5) Communications Committee Report: Brian Bell provided an update on behalf of the Communications Committee.

a) The communications committee has been focused on creating systems to organize and document the work and decisions of BBIA so that they may be accessible to the public.

b) Additional work has been completed to improve the website experience, including better organization of upcoming BBIA meetings/events.

c) A written report was included in the agenda packet for reference.

d) Brian Posed the following question to the audience: What would a good slogan be to capture the idea of Birch Bay Incorporation?

i) Jan Barnes suggested that the slogan be inclusive and that My Way or Your Way may be divisive. A more inclusive slogan would be Our Way

ii) DeeDee Ross suggested the slogan be “Birch Bay Today”

e) Brian also asked: What information would you like to see that is not currently available on the website?

f) Brian further asked if anybody had experienced challenges in asking questions through the website?

i) An audience member asked if they could sign up to receive notifications online without joining the association as a member. Matt explained that signing up for email notifications does not commit anyone to membership.

6) **Research & Feasibility Committee Report:** Chuck Kinzer provided an update on behalf of the Research & Feasibility Committee.

- a) The committee officially affirmed the proposed boundaries that align with the urban growth area designated in Whatcom County's Comprehensive Plan. Regardless, the topic of boundaries can be revisited in the future if there is a compelling reason to do so.
- b) The Committee will work to gather information about taxes and revenues generated with the Birch Bay UGA and consider what expenses would be required to deliver services within the boundaries.
- c) The committee's early priority is to define a scope for update of the incorporation feasibility study. Further, the committee will work to develop community surveys to gather information about public priorities and perspectives.
- d) A written report was included in the meeting agenda packet.
- e) Chuck posed the following question to attendees: What type of information would you like to see gathered by the committee or included in the feasibility study update:
 - i) Jerry Calhoun Is there any thought about having Birch Bay annex into an existing city rather than incorporating as its own city?
 - (1) Chuck responded that initial public surveys suggest that there is low support or a negative association with the idea of incorporating with Blaine. He added that initial data suggests Birch Bay would have a larger tax base than Blaine.
 - (2) Jerry Calhoun also asked how supporters of the BBIA's work can financially contribute to the effort?
 - (3) Jerry Calhoun added his priority that a potential city of Birch Bay have strong coordination with the Sheriff's office for public safety services in Birch Bay.
 - ii) Ruthie Danielson – Ruthie shared that she has been a resident for 40 years and Ruthie shared that the UGA boundaries available through public GIS portals do not match the map in the County's map.
 - iii) Edie Berry – Edie shared that Birch Bay is no longer a resort town, that is is a community with families and many long-term residents.
 - iv) Donald Muir – Donald shared his perspective that we should consider that this effort is not only about today's residents of Birch Bay, rather it was about planning for future growth and character of the community.
 - v) Patrick Alesse – Shared the story of Galileo's visit to Rome to illustrate the point that public perception and common belief don't always align with the facts. Patrick also shared his perspective that sometimes it is worth paying more for better apples or services.
 - vi) Robin Hitts – Robin shared her experience of being annexed into the City of Bellingham and the impact on density as a result. She shared that there are both benefits and challenges associated with being part of a city.
 - vii) Lisa Guthrie shared in response to Robin's comment that Birch Bay is already an urban growth area with zoning that promotes growth and density and that this was not related to becoming a city. Rather, becoming a city would allow Birch Bay residents to have greater control over decisions about how growth would happen.

7) **Open Session:** Individuals attending in person or online were provided with an opportunity to make comments or pose questions to the BBIA steering committee:

a) Ruthie Danielson – Ruthie shared that presentation provided by BBIA representatives and the BBIA website are effective. She asked that multiple formats of information sharing are considered in reaching a broader audience. Ruthie shared the observation that the information seems to be pro incorporation and that she encourages inclusion of all data, even information that may not favor incorporation. She used the past slide representing results from an online survey to illustrate the point.

8) **Guest Speaker, Roland Middleton:** Roland Middleton, longtime Whatcom County Public Works project manager was invited to speak to those in attendance. Roland's presentation and comments represented his own perspective and experience, he was not speaking on behalf of or representing Whatcom County.

a) Roland Middleton recognized Doralee and others who were involved in the creation and adoption of the Birch Bay subarea plan. Doralee shared that it was community planning and organization that has allowed Birch Bay to accomplish big things like the purchase of a park, formation of Birch Bay WARM/construction of the berm, and funding of a library. Roland shared the history of the Birch Bay berm planning and construction. Roland made it clear that he was not representing Whatcom County rather as a individual who has been involved in Birch Bay for many years.

i) Max Archer asked for an update on the roundabout that is planned for the intersection at Birch Bay Lynden and Blaine Rd.

(1) Roland offered to follow up and provide information about the project schedule.

(2) Donald Muir shared his perspective that this was a great example of why Birch Bay needed to incorporate to make decisions that reflect local needs and priorities.

(3) Robin Hitts asked who which organization would be responsible for planning of extension of utility services:

(a) Roland shared that the answer depends on the utility/service. Some are managed by public utilities separate from the County or potential city government and some could be managed by a city department (e.g. police services, public works services).

ii) Jerry Calhoun shared his concerns that Shintaffer is currently not designed to standards that are safe relative to the amount of traffic and use it receives.

9) **Steering Committee Member Updates:**

10) **Adjourn:** Caprice Pine made a motion to adjourn the meeting and it was seconded by Sharman Burnam, the meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m.