

# 2026 BBIA Steering Committee Candidates

Thank you for reviewing the candidates for the 2026 Birch Bay Incorporation Association (BBIA) Steering Committee. As we enter our third year of incorporation exploration, we are pleased to present this year's candidates, with elections set for our Third Annual General Meeting on November 20, 2025.

The Steering Committee, which may have up to 15 members, is vital to BBIA's mission of transparently evaluating cityhood for Birch Bay. Committee members coordinate outreach, hold monthly public meetings, and liaise with county and state authorities. They attend regular meetings, participate in subcommittees, and volunteer at events to keep the community informed and engaged.

This year's candidates bring diverse backgrounds and perspectives, each outlined in their statements. We encourage you to explore their qualifications and commitments. The last page includes a map from the 2004 County Council Adopted Birch Bay Community Plan, providing general locations of the candidates.

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- 1) **Candidate Name:** Michael Edward Rutkowski      **Neighborhood:** Hillsdale  
**Eligibility:** I live within the current proposed boundaries.  
**Statement:** I served as an Electronics Chief Petty Officer for 22 years and retired on January 31, 1985. I then went to work as an installation reports person for the U.S. Border Patrol from April 1, 1993, until January 1, 2001, when DHS was formed. I retired in June 2008.
- I have been a resident of Harborview Estates for 10 years and served on the Birch Bay Steering Committee for one year. I have lived in Harborview Estates since September 1, 1997, and continue to reside there today.
- I wish to run for the Board for the coming year.
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- 2) **Candidate Name:** Lisa Guthrie      **Neighborhood:** Birch Point Village Reach  
**Eligibility:** I live within the current proposed boundaries.  
**Statement:** I am a lifelong Whatcom County resident, and for the past 20 years, Birch Bay has been my primary home, along with my hubby Greg, our kids and grandkids. I care deeply about Birch Bay and take pride in being part of this community, working to protect both the Bay itself and our way of life. For the past two years, I have had the privilege of serving on the Steering Committee, and I am now asking for the community's support to continue this important work for the betterment of Birch Bay. This process has been an ongoing learning experience, and I am committed to dedicating the time and effort needed to see it through. I am retired and bring with me a background in Business Management, Construction Administration, and Land Use Development, as well as Financial Management of a successful 501c3 NonProfit Dog Rescue.
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- 3) **Candidate Name:** Michael Stringam      **Neighborhood:** Birch Point Village Reach  
**Eligibility:** I live within the current proposed boundaries.  
**Statement:** Birch Bay resident since 2015. Current Secretary of BBIA Steering Committee. Retired Civil Engineer with more than 400 projects in the United States, Canada, China and Europe. Have appeared before City Councils, Planning Commissions, hearing examiners and appeal boards. Adjunct professor at the University of Calgary. Previous volunteer experience with Red Cross, YMCA, Habitat for Humanity, Meals on Wheels. Current member of Birch Bay Village ACC (Architectural Control Committee) and BBIA Steering Committee. Have presented BBIA information at many Birch Bay Events and HOAs.
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- 4) **Candidate Name:** Pauline Nefcy      **Neighborhood:** Central Reaches  
**Eligibility:** I live within the current proposed boundaries.  
**Statement:** Education: Master of Business Administration (MBA), Master of Science in Community Health, Certified Public Accountant (retired CPA)

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Work Experience: President/CEO of Healthcare Company (INS), Director of Decision and Information Support (Group Health Cooperative), Director of Finance and Administration (Seattle Art Museum), Assistant Director of Finance (Virginia Mason Hospital), Independent Healthcare Consultant  
Community Service: Treasurer at City of Clyde Hill, Treasurer at Seattle Children's Museum, participated in Birch Bay Steering Committee resulting in the Birch Bay Incorporation Feasibility Study 2008, involved in '92 incorporation efforts.

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- 5) **Candidate Name:** Jason Polverari **Neighborhood:** Central Reaches  
**Eligibility:** I live within the current proposed boundaries.  
**Statement:** I've been a part of this community for over 20 years and I would like to see the Birch Bay area remain a place we can be proud of. I've been a part of this committee since the beginning and look forward to the opportunity to evaluate the feasibility study and help determine the right path moving forward. Thank you for your consideration.
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- 6) **Candidate Name:** Matt Berry **Neighborhood:** Cottonwood Reach  
**Eligibility:** I live within the current proposed boundaries.  
**Statement:** My family moved from Blaine to Birch Bay thirty years ago. We've seen our population triple in that time, which is why I believe this discussion about how we wished to be governed is both timely and necessary. I am asking to be re-elected to the Steering Committee to continue facilitating, while also recognizing the need for new voices to carry the discussion.
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- 7) **Candidate Name:** Jan Barnes **Neighborhood:** Cottonwood Reach  
**Eligibility:** I live within the current proposed boundaries.  
**Statement:** I love our Birch Bay community. As a property owner since 2006 and full time resident since 2019, I recognize the unique "one of a kind" place that we are so lucky to live in. I want to do what's best to preserve and protect what we have. We all want that. What will the future bring us? The only thing we can count on is change. And how that change is managed, both toward a vision and through fiscal responsibility, will be key. My first year on the committee has been educational - learning about the workings of county and local governments, meeting the many faces of our community, and personally working on sharing information with and getting feedback from friends and neighbors. I would like to continue these efforts. I am waiting for the Whatcom County's feasibility study on incorporation to be released (hopefully) before year's end. This will either give us a road map to continue forward with sharing the findings with our neighbors or will indicate that incorporation is not financially feasible. And if not, we need to determine how to ratchet up our involvement and awareness with Whatcom County. I thank you in advance for your support.
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- 8) **Candidate Name:** Patrick Alesse **Neighborhood:** Central Reaches  
**Eligibility:** I live within the current proposed boundaries.  
**Statement:** I have owned a business at Birch Bay since 1971. I have been a resident since 1992. I have been involved with the community through the chamber, Birch Bay Water Sewer District, the Blaine Birch Park & Rec District and even the incorporation effort 1992. I recognize that Birch Bay environmentally is an exceptional place to live and must be preserved and open to all.
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- 9) **Candidate Name:** Jonathan Mallahan **Neighborhood:** Central Reaches  
**Eligibility:** I own property but do not reside within the current proposed boundaries (vacation property, second home, short-term rental, etc.)  
**Statement:** Birch Bay is my home and where I grew up. It is a place that my family has enjoyed together for generations. I believe the question of incorporation is one of the most impactful issues facing our community as we plan to ensure it continues to be a special place enjoyed by all. That is why I have committed my time over the last two years to help provide clear, accurate, information about the issue of incorporation and to support public forums where this information is shared and discussed. My professional background is in municipal government. For 10 years, I served in various leadership roles working in community development, business and development services, housing and human services,

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code enforcement, and community engagement. For the last eight years, I have worked for a non profit organization focused on housing and human services supporting those who are most vulnerable. I look forward to the opportunity to continue the work of the Birch Bay Incorporation Association in 2026.

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- 10) **Candidate Name:** Chuck Kinzer **Neighborhood:** Cottonwood Reach  
**Eligibility:** I live within the current proposed boundaries.  
**Statement:** My professional background includes data collection and analysis, grant and report writing, communicating with government agencies, and survey construction, all wrapped up in a love of Birch Bay. Having served on the Steering Committee and Co-Chaired the Research and Feasibility Committee in its first year, I strongly favor collecting and transparently sharing good data before making our incorporation decision. Looking carefully at evidence before making decisions— especially decisions that aren't reversible—is critical. Especially now, when a formal, feasibility study's results will be provided next year, I believe it's important to carefully analyze that study's results and implications, and transparently communicate those to the larger community so that an informed incorporation decision can be made. Ultimately, we will need to communicate effectively with our local community, the County and the State to best reflect our resident's wishes about becoming a city. Having been a part of Birch Bay since I was 12, when my parents bought the property on which my wife and I now live, I remember speed limits of 5 miles per hour, the amusement park, roller rink, riding stables, swimming pool, the air force base and the original location of the C-Shop. Birch Bay has changed since then, and significant changes will happen as it continues to grow. Incorporation may be the best way to ensure changes are not haphazard. As a long-time planning committee member of Wings Over Water Northwest and a volunteer photographer for The Northern Light, I believe it's important to maintain Birch Bay's unique culture while considering the potential benefits incorporation might bring. But, until the feasibility study is completed, I best describe myself as considering incorporation, but not yet having made up my mind.
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- 11) **Candidate Name:** Yorkson Jeen **Neighborhood:** Birch Point Village Reach  
**Eligibility:** I live within the current proposed boundaries.  
**Statement:** I have fallen in love with our vibrant community after living here for a year. After residing in three countries and five cities over the past 30 years, I can confidently say Birch Bay is the most welcoming place I've known, making it a true privilege to raise my children here. During my one year of involvement with the Birch Bay Incorporation Association (BBIA), managing the website, creating visuals for sound bites, and supporting outreach efforts has deepened my commitment to fostering connections and growth in our community. I am eager to continue participating with dedication, kindness, and collaboration to keep Birch Bay a wonderful place to live, grow, and thrive.
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- 12) **Candidate Name:** Sharman Burnam **Neighborhood:** Central Reaches  
**Eligibility:** I live within the current proposed boundaries.  
**Statement:** At the age of 5 my Canadian parents purchased our property at Birch Bay. I know the joys of being a child and spending every summer, Easter and Christmas break for 13 years at Birch Bay. It was inevitable I'd marry an American and throughout my adult years, regardless of where I lived in the world, I came back to Birch Bay. In 2019 my husband and I moved permanently to our Birch Bay Homestead on Terrill Creek.

My career in sales and marketing and owning my own business, has allowed me the flexibility to follow my passion of volunteer work. In the past I have held many leadership positions such as Whatcom County Girl Scout Cookie Chairman & Guide leader, for years I was an active PTA Board member of Custer Elementary School. Living in Snohomish County I was active with our local Senior Centers managing their outside travel and work parties. I was a board member of my HOA for over 10 years along with volunteering with Skagit and Whatcom County Habitat for Humanity by helping to raise money for affordable housing. Currently, I am a member and volunteer for our Birch Bay Chamber of Commerce, as well as Treasurer for the Friends of Birch Bay Library.

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Rather than sit back and allow Whatcom County to make decisions on our future, I am more than willing to be an active/ working member of the Birch Bay Incorporation Association Steering Committee. I feel my strong leadership and marketing skills, along with my passion for our Birch Bay lifestyle, would benefit our Birch Bay Incorporation efforts.

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- 13) **Candidate Name:** Carolyn Sherwin **Neighborhood:** Central Reaches

**Eligibility:** I live within the current proposed boundaries.

**Statement:** (My Husband and I) are residents of Birch Bay since April 2025, I grew up in the summer months at Birch Bay since the age of 10, as our family had/has a beach home out at Sandy Point. I have seen many, many changes in the area over time. I remember going to the Carnival! I have worked in the Medical field for about 20 +/- years. I do not have any experience in local, County or State (politics), but would love the opportunity to know more (and get involved with) Birch Bay(and surrounding Communities) Also to get to know more people.

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- 14) **Candidate Name:** Hawkan Stephen **Neighborhood:** Central Uplands

**Eligibility:** I live within the current proposed boundaries.

**Statement:** As a resident of the Baycrest community, I want to continue to see my community thrive. I am an employee at PSE in the power generation division. My prior experience in the gas industry shaped my negotiation skills as well as changed the way I approach problems. Understanding both my perspective and the counter perspective in negotiations has taught me to not lose sight of the end goal. The end goal is a shared sense of accomplishment for all involved and a middle ground that both parties are happy with. I wish to bring the same mentality to this Committee.

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- 15) **Candidate Name:** Jeff Frank **Neighborhood:** Cottonwood Reach

**Eligibility:** I live within the current proposed boundaries.

**Statement:** My professional life has been about two main ideas: solving problems and service to others, often both at the same time. I started out as naval officer where I learned the value of collaboration, attention to detail, and especially how to get things done. After that I worked for decades as an engineering consultant, finding solutions in the oceanographic, environmental, and clean energy arenas. In that role I learned the importance of robust, non-biased analysis of facts at hand, and the importance of forging an optimal solution. After several decades I retired from engineering and trained as Science/Math teacher. Around that time my wife Linda and I went back east to care for my aging parents, and I taught STEM in the school district of Philadelphia. As a teacher in an under-resourced urban district, I saw first hand the amazing power of connecting with accurate information and new ideas.

Along the way I have been involved in several civic organizations here in the North Sound: the Interfaith Shelter in Everett, the Warm Beach Community Association, and various efforts to oppose over-development in rural/coastal Snohomish County (among others). While back east I volunteered in efforts to expand educational access and preserve old-growth forests. In the course of these projects I found out that my experience as an independent engineering consultant is directly applicable in terms of communication, building partnerships, data acquisition/analysis, and especially fund raising.

Regarding incorporation specifically, I really like the idea of our beautiful, vibrant community having the benefits of self-determination, and economic autonomy - but I also understand the challenges. Being an engineer I would like have a look at the data, hear what it means to various informed stake holders, and ultimately come down on the right side of this issue. As a new community member I would like to help others do the same, and that's why I am applying for a position on the Steering Committee.

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**MAP FROM COUNTY COUNCIL ADOPTED BIRCH BAY COMMUNITY PLAN (2004)**

