



1

1. Call to Order & Group Agreement



I will approach others with the assumption of positive intentions and treat everyone with respect.



I will strive to balance my contributions with those of others to ensure equal participation.



I will consciously set aside the belief that my perspective is inherently superior and remain open to others' viewpoints.

2

Roll Call

- Matt Berry
 - Lisa Guthrie
 - Sharman Burnam
 - Michael Stringam
 - Jonathan Mallahan
 - Jason Polverari
 - Patrick Alesse
 - Yorkson Jeen
- Caprice Pine
 - Michael Rutkowski
 - Jan Barnes
 - Lisa Black
 - Pauline Nefcy
 - Holly G Hamilton
 - Raymond Chladny

Thank you for your dedication and contributions as a member of the 2025 BBIA Steering Committee!

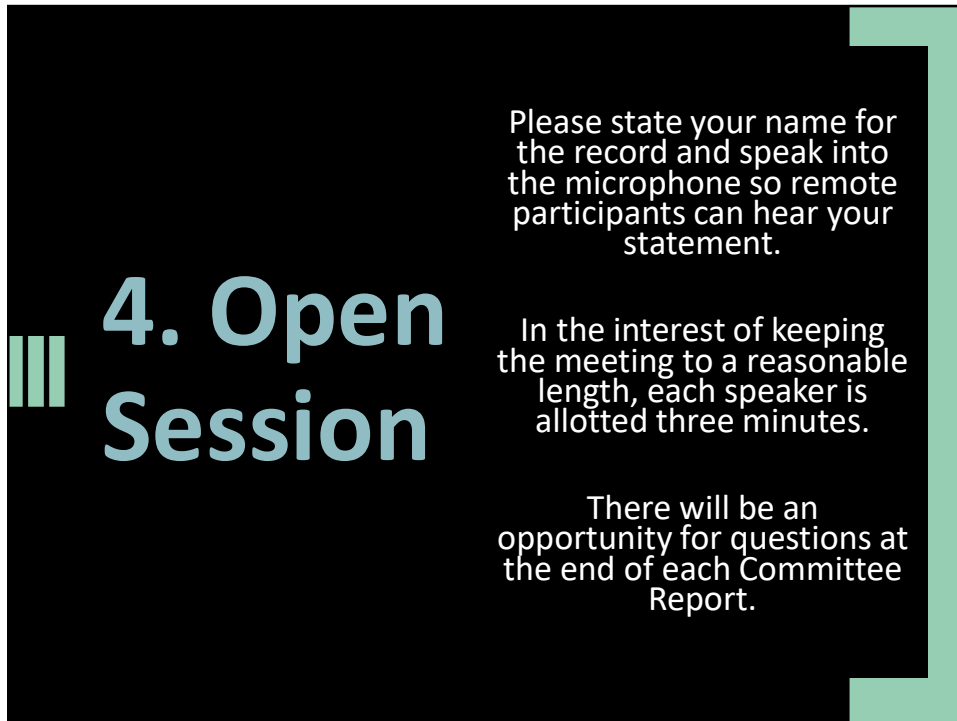
3

3. Approval of Minutes

Access minutes, surveys, studies, meeting recordings, and more at WeAreBirchBay.org

BBIA Steering Committee Meeting Minutes	
2023-08-09 Incorporation Committee Minutes	2024-10-17 BBIA Steering Committee Minutes
2023-10-18 Incorporation Committee Minutes	2024-12-18 BBIA Steering Committee Minutes
2024-02-09 BBIA Steering Committee Minutes	2025-01-16 BBIA Steering Committee Minutes
2024-01-18 BBIA Steering Committee Minutes	2025-03-20 BBIA Steering Committee Minutes
2024-03-01 BBIA Steering Committee Minutes	2025-04-17 BBIA Steering Committee Minutes
2024-05-18 BBIA Steering Committee Minutes	2025-06-19 BBIA Steering Committee Minutes
2024-06-20 BBIA Steering Committee Minutes	2025-07-17 BBIA Steering Committee Minutes
2024-07-18 BBIA Steering Committee Minutes	2025-09-18 BBIA Steering Committee Minutes

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III

4. Open Session

Please state your name for the record and speak into the microphone so remote participants can hear your statement.

In the interest of keeping the meeting to a reasonable length, each speaker is allotted three minutes.

There will be an opportunity for questions at the end of each Committee Report.

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5. Executive Committee Report

Committee Chair: Matt Berry

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A little history...

“In 1992, an attempt was made to incorporate Birch Bay; however, it was defeated by the voters. In 2008, the county completed an incorporation feasibility study for the Birch Bay UGA which identified the issues with and benefits of incorporating. **It concluded that Birch Bay incorporation was financially feasible given the community's tax base and service needs.** The community has not made another attempt to incorporate...”

Source: Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan, Page 2-47

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Birch Bay was established as an Urban Growth Area in 1997

RCW 36.70A.110 Comprehensive plans — Urban growth areas.

(1) Each county that is required or chooses to plan under RCW 36.70A.040 shall designate **an urban growth area or areas within which urban growth shall be encouraged** and outside of which growth can occur only if it is not urban in nature...

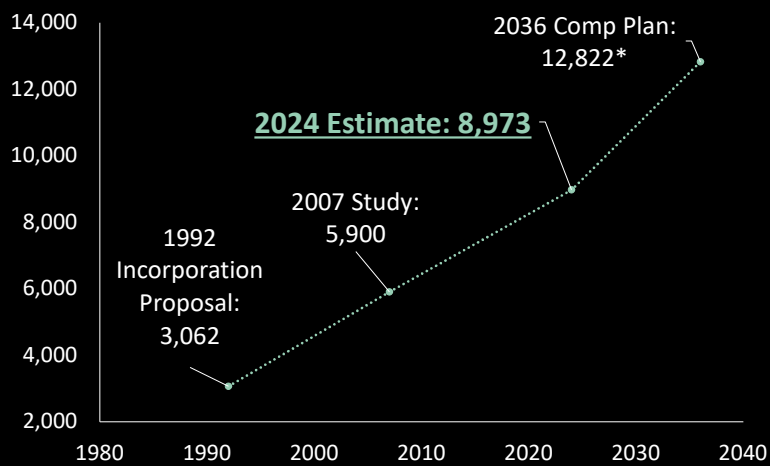
(4) In general, **cities are the units of local government most appropriate to provide urban governmental services.**

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“Whatcom County will encourage and assist the citizens of Birch Bay Urban Growth Area with incorporation when appropriate.”

Source: Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 2 - Land Use, Policy 2Q-5

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Our resident population has grown and will continue to grow...

10

Given that our population has nearly tripled since the last vote, it makes sense to revisit the topic of incorporation.

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Our purpose since 2023

The purpose of BBIA is to explore and, if found feasible, advocate for incorporation to give residents of Birch Bay more direct control over the future of their community.

BBIA will accomplish this by:

1. Creating an inclusive, nonpartisan process to explore the creation, through incorporation, of a future City of Birch Bay...
2. Promoting a feasibility study and community engagement, soliciting feedback, and information sharing...
3. Serving as a liaison with County, State, and Boundary Review Board...

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Thank you for helping us achieve our goals

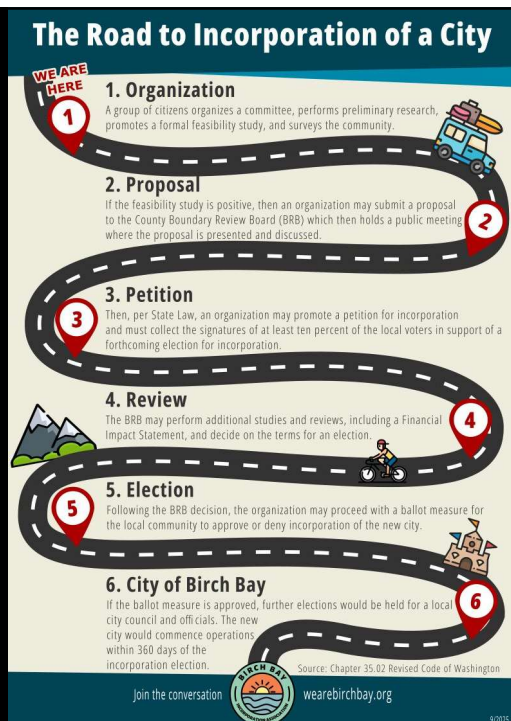
1. We held **175 hours of open public meetings**, conducted multiple surveys, hosted information booths, gathered **4,430 community opinions**, and shared **14,900 pages of information**
1. We successfully advocated for an updated feasibility study, due by the end of this year
 - More info at <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/4615/Birch-Bay-Incorporation-Feasibility-Stud>
 - [See the recent Dash Point-Brown's Point Study for an example](#)
2. We hosted and engaged with the County, State, and Boundary Review Board... (plus districts, community groups, neighboring cities, Chambers of Commerce, HOAs, etc.)

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Regarding timeline...

- There is a clear and well document process
- Incorporation requires thorough research and consideration
- It will take years...

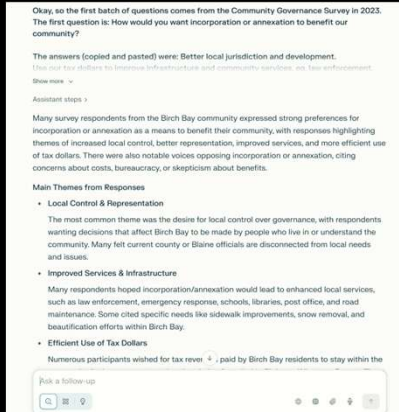
Source: BBIA Soundbite from
September 2025



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Perplexity.AI Analysis of All Community Feedback

- Perplexity is an advanced AI research platform that can efficiently analyze large amounts of data
- We used Perplexity to review **4,430 instances of community feedback** (comments, surveys, emails, etc) identifying common opinions



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How do we feel about incorporation in Birch Bay?

Hopes

- **Local control:** Decision-making by locals focused on local needs, not county-wide priorities.
- **Improved services:** More policing, public works, and new amenities.
- **Fiscal accountability:** There's a strong desire to keep tax dollars in Birch Bay for local projects and services.

Concerns

- **Tax uncertainty:** Many worry incorporation could raise property taxes
- **Growth:** Respondents feel that if we incorporate, Birch Bay will be developed, and we will lose our character

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Our property taxes have already increased

- In November 2024 Whatcom County used banked capacity to raise our property taxes by 2.7% (more than the annual maximum)
- On November 5, 2025, Whatcom County proposed raising most property tax levies by another annual maximum of 1% and increasing the EMS levy by 19.9% to collect revenue previously uncollected
 - The County also plans to divert \$1.15 million from the Road Fund to the General Fund, **leaving less money for road maintenance in unincorporated and rural areas**

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2024's tax increases were lower for cities



Source: County Council Meeting – November 19, 2024

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5 of the 6 newest WA cities pay a lower property tax rate than their county's rate

Source: BBIA Soundbite from May 2025

Did you know...

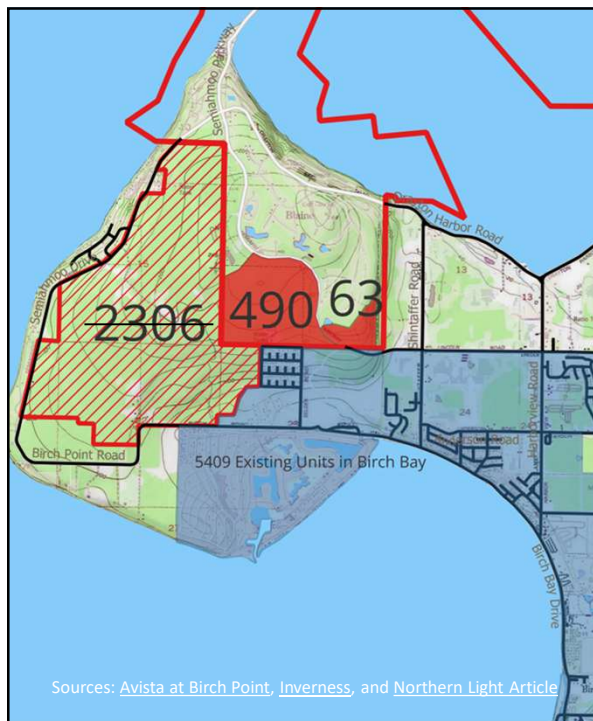
5 of the 6 most recently incorporated WA cities pay a lower property tax rate than their county's rate?

Of the 17 Washington cities incorporated since 1983, 76% pay on average 10.6% less than their host county rate. Here are the six newest cities:

	City 	County 
Spokane Valley Pop. 108,235		\$1.55 vs \$1.65
Liberty Lake Pop. 13,188		\$1.68 vs \$1.65
Sammamish Pop. 65,116		\$1.94 vs \$2.20
Kenmore Pop. 23,391		\$1.66 vs \$2.20
Covington Pop. 21,125		\$1.67 vs \$2.20
Maple Valley Pop. 28,434		\$1.62 vs \$2.20

Sources: Tax Rates - Washington State Dept. of Revenue, Population - Washington State Office of Financial Management 2024 Estimated Population.

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Sources: Avista at Birch Point, Inverness, and Northern Light Article

Development is happening

- There are two active developments within Blaine City Limits which will have impacts on Birch Bay's stormwater and traffic
 - 553 homes
- City of Blaine recently proposed expanding their UGA and UGA reserve into Birch Point
 - 1,046 acres with the potential for 2,306 homes
- This does not include the ongoing development within the Birch Bay UGA (1,034 units, single and multi-family)

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“If west of Semiahmoo becomes a part of Blaine, then we can **protect the wooded character of current Semiahmoo** by ensuring wildlife corridors and ample landscape buffers between our current homes and **the new development down the hill.**”

Blaine City Councilmember

Letter to the Editor, The Northern Light from August 6, 2025

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Traffic is coming

For just one of these developments, a traffic study forecasts:

- 2,640 daily trips turning south towards Birch Bay
- 943 daily trips turning north towards Blaine
- **Total of 3,583 daily vehicle trips exiting and returning via Harborview Rd and Lincoln Rd**



Table 3: Trip Generation Summary

Land Use	Size	Average Daily Trips (ADTs)	AM Peak-Hour			PM Peak-Hour		
			In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total
ITE LUC 210, Single-Family Detached	323 Units	3,046	57	169	226	192	112	304
ITE LUC 215, Single-Family Attached	26 Units	187	3	9	12	9	6	15
ITE LUC 220, Multifamily (Low-Rise)	80 Units	539	8	24	32	26	15	41
TOTAL		3,772	68	202	270	227	133	360

Source: Traffic Study for the Avista Development

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New State Housing Laws Driving Growth in Birch Bay (UGA)

- **HB 1337 – ADUs:** Requires counties to allow at least **two ADUs on single-family lots inside UGAs** like Birch Bay and limits local barriers (owner-occupancy, parking, excessive fees).
- **HB 1110 – Middle Housing:** Requires cities and **UGAs to upzone single-family areas to allow duplexes, triplexes, etc.**, increasing middle housing in areas traditionally dedicated to single-family detached housing.

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Big decisions that affect us are being made by decent people, but they don't live in Birch Bay



Source: City & County Officials Meeting – February 20, 2025

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Encouraging comment from Councilmember Elenbaas during discussion of 2025 Study funding



Source: County Council Meeting - July 23, 2024

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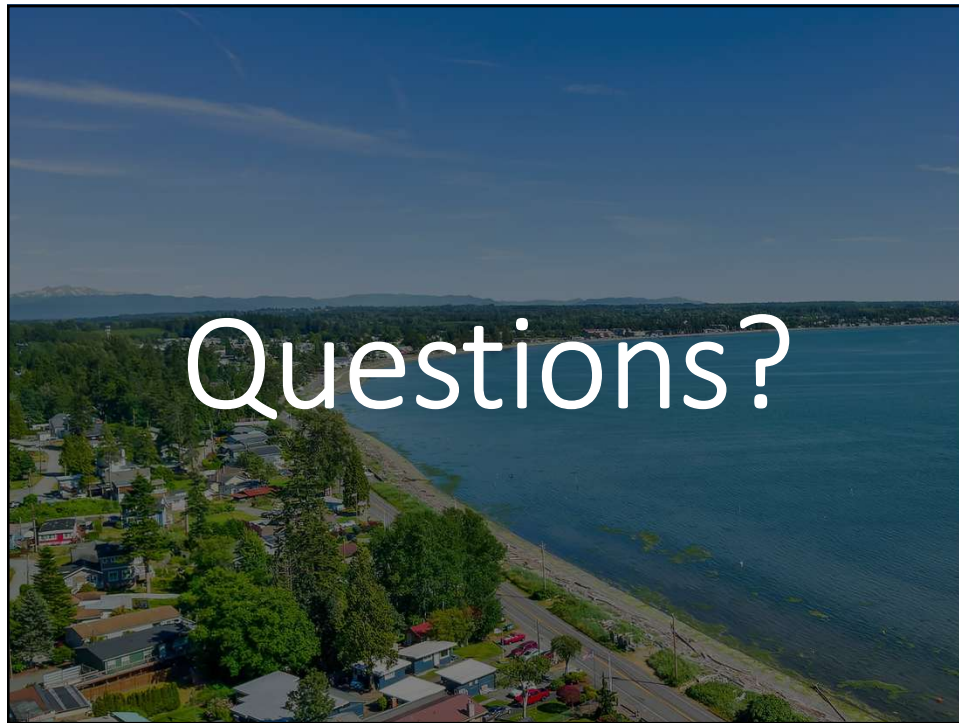
What are we most thankful for in Birch Bay?

(Perplexity.AI analysis of 4,430 comments received)

1. Natural beauty (bay, beaches, sunsets, and wildlife)
2. Strong sense of community and friendly neighbors
3. Easy access to outdoor recreation (walking the berm, biking, parks, and water activities)
4. Local businesses that add character to the area
5. A slower, more relaxed pace of life
6. Active community engagement and residents who truly care about the future
7. Community events for strengthening ties and creating lasting memories



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6.
**Communications
Committee
Report**

Committee
Chair: Lisa
Guthrie

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Expanding Engagement

Focus: Increasing reach and inviting community participation in the process.

Key Email Achievements in 2025:



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Outreach Highlights

- Information booths at:
 - Kite Festival
 - Rollback Car Show
 - Sand Sculpture Competition
- Presentations at HOA Meetings
- Presentations at Neighborhood gatherings
- Presentations to community groups



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Outreach Highlights

Spring 2025
newsletter funded by
BBIA donations
sharing information to
all homes in the Birch
Bay – Blaine area via
The Northern Light
newspaper

WeAreBirchBay.org Newsletter
Spring 2025 Community News, Local Stories

We Are Birch Bay
The Birch Bay Incorporation Association (BBIA) was formed in 2023 to explore whether becoming a city is in the best interest of our community. Birch Bay has been designated an Urban Growth Area (UGA) since 1997, with state and county policies encouraging growth. Our population has nearly doubled since 2008 and is currently at 10,000, larger than 78% of cities in Washington.

Our Mission: Fact-Based and Nonpartisan
BBIA is a nonpartisan, fact-finding group that facilitates open public discussion. We are not advocating for or against incorporation, we're simply asking:
Are we ready to take responsibility for the decisions affecting our community?

A Look Back— and Forward
In 2008, a county-commissioned feasibility study found cityhood financially viable, projecting a slightly higher level of services without raising tax rates, with our population much larger today, it's time to re-examine the facts. BBIA is working to support a new, independent feasibility study along with providing fact-based information so residents can evaluate whether incorporation makes sense.

Understanding the Process
We are still in the early research stage, focused on gathering data, facilitating productive discussions, while waiting on the results of a third-party feasibility study which should be completed later this year. The process of incorporation itself is lengthy and detailed beginning with a notice of intent, public hearings, a petition phase, review by the Boundary Review Board, and finally, a community vote.

Our Community Outreach
Since forming, BBIA has worked hard to educate and engage the community. We have:
• Secured County funding for a new feasibility study
• Hosted public meetings with local leaders and experts
• Sent over 20,000 informational emails to keep residents informed
• Conducted surveys and roundtable discussions
• Engaged with local stakeholders, HOA boards, businesses, and service providers
• Staffed information booths at local events
• Generated media coverage in The Northern Light, Cascadia Daily News, KOMU

Get Involved
As we move forward, we invite all Birch Bay residents to learn more, ask questions, and help shape our future. Stay updated for meetings and events at: WeAreBirchBay.org

PROPOSED PRELIMINARY BOUNDARIES
BBIA Proposed Preliminary Boundaries
Birch Bay Urban Growth Area
Birch Bay Census Designated Place
Blaine City Limits

What's the Deal with Taxes?
Bottom line is taxes depend on the level of services that people want. In 2008, the Birch Bay Incorporation Feasibility Study stated that "If Birch Bay residents pay the same level of taxes, they pay to Whatcom County, a City of Birch Bay would generate enough revenues to provide a slightly higher level of service than Birch Bay residents currently receive" (Page E-2) We believe that remains true today, but we want a new feasibility study to make sure.
However, if Birch Bay residents want more policing, better snow removal, more road maintenance, or increases in other services, then it may be that taxes would go up so that desired services could go up.

-continued page 2

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Sound Bites

Communications
Committee
collaborated with
Research & Feasibility
to produce 6
soundbites to help
better illustrate
complex topics

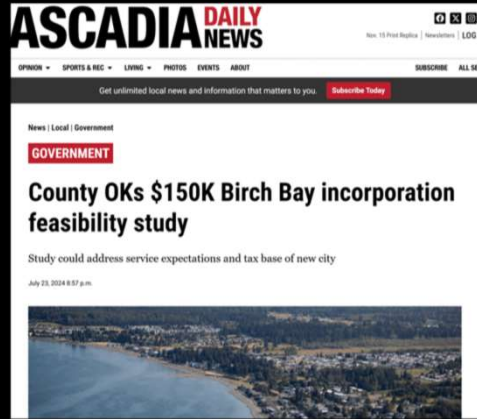


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Media Coverage

Meeting notices and updates received coverage from:

- The Northern Light
- All Point Bulletin
- Cascadia Daily News
- My Bellingham Now
- Cascade Radio
- Birch Bay Buzz



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2025 Community Survey

"We Are Birch Bay" Survey 2025		
All BBIA Responses to Oct.30 2025		
What Local Services in Birch Bay are Most Important to You ?	Rate Importance (1=low importance; 5=high importance)	
	Average Ratings	Top Ten
Local Police Station / response times	3.81	4
Local Post Office / ZIP Code	2.58	
Local Elementary school	2.23	
Local control of taxes and fees	4.28	1
Local Fire / EMT response times	4.12	2
Local parks/playgrounds/sportsfields	3.10	
Local City Hall / Municipal Court	2.22	
Local zoning control / density	3.73	5
Local traffic and parking management	3.36	9
Local fireworks and event management	3.00	
Local watershed / flood control	3.84	3
Local community center / pool	2.58	
Local Building Codes / permits	3.33	10
Local Library	3.02	
Local water and sewer services	3.37	8
Local art galleries / theatres	1.87	
Trails, paths, sidewalks, bike lanes	3.46	7
Local waterfront management	3.58	6
Local street design and maintenance	3.06	
Local grocery store / drug store	3.18	
Local restaurants / retail shops	3.27	
Local Medical / dental services	3.16	

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Research and Feasibility Committee

In 2025, our committee focused on answers to questions that are most important to you, including:

- **Public Safety** – What level of police services would Birch Bay need and what could it afford without raising taxes?
- **Tax Rates** – Do incorporated cities have higher taxes than unincorporated areas? Would a City of Birch Bay have higher taxes?
- **Potential Revenue** – Would a future City of Birch Bay generate adequate revenue to support necessary services?
- **Neighboring Cities** – What about our neighbors? How do they fund city services?

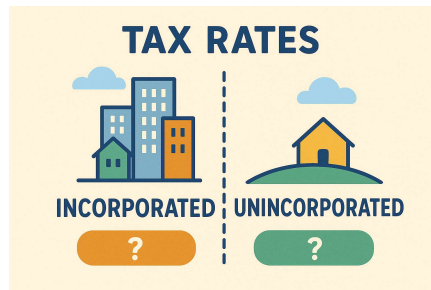
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Public Safety – Level of Service & Affordability

Based on BBIA revenue projections incorporated Birch Bay would generate \$4.97 million in general fund revenues with **no increase to taxes.**

- Of the cities studied, the average spent per officer was \$195k (inclusive of all budgeted costs)
- 11 police officers are needed to provide 24/7 policing in Birch Bay (\$2.15 million estimated cost)
- If Birch Bay committed the average amount of its general fund budget to public safety as comparable cities (44.2%) \$2.2 million could be spent on public safety
- This level of service represents an 1,100% increase to current service levels

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Tax Rates – Do incorporated cities pay more?

Based on analysis of every city in Washington we found:

- Incorporated cities pay an average of 12.55% more taxes than their host county
- Newly incorporated cities (those formed since 1990) pay an average of 10.6% less
- Cities have higher levels of service relative to unincorporated areas.

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Potential Revenue – Would a future City of Birch Bay generate adequate revenue to pay for necessary services?

- These revenue sources represent the largest general fund sources available to cities and are not comprehensive.
- Cities also collect revenues from enterprise services (permit/program fees), state and federal grants, and other sources
- BBIA also estimates that Birch Bay would generate \$1.6 million in annual Real Estate Excise Tax revenue (based on 2024 sale volume)

City of Birch Bay Potential General Fund Revenues

Property Taxes	\$2,055,194
Sales Tax	\$2,600,000
State Shared Revenues	\$315,670
Total	\$4,970,864

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Neighboring Cities – What about our neighbors? How do they fund city services?

	Ferndale		Lynden		Blaine	
	(2024 Budget)		(2025 Budget)		(2025 Budget)	
Property Tax	\$2,061,256	13.1%	\$4,058,569	26.1%	\$1,221,423	16.1%
Retail Sales Tax	\$3,665,153	23.3%	\$3,964,658	25.5%	\$2,555,414	33.7%
Utility Tax	\$2,549,192	16.2%	\$3,386,394	21.8%	\$1,651,000	21.8%
Licenses/Permits	\$1,190,448	7.6%	\$3,401,950	21.9%	\$475,000	6.3%
Intergovernmental	\$588,707	3.7%	\$583,000	3.8%	\$229,965	3.0%
Goods and Services	\$1,298,561	8.3%		0.0%	\$200,000	2.6%
Misc. Revenues	\$4,386,369	27.9%	\$133,000	0.9%	\$1,252,442	16.5%
Total funds	\$15,739,686	100.0%	\$15,527,571	100.0%	\$7,585,244	100.0%

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Primary Operating Budget Revenue Sources Average for Neighboring Cities*

<u>Revenue Sources</u>	<u>3 City Totals</u>	<u>3 City Average</u>	<u>%</u>
1 Retail Sales Taxes	\$10,185,225	\$ 3,395,075	26.2%
2 Utility Taxes	\$7,586,586	\$ 2,528,862	19.5%
3 Property Taxes	\$7,341,248	\$ 2,447,083	18.9%
4 Licenses/Permits	\$5,067,398	\$ 1,689,133	13.0%
5 Goods and Services	\$1,498,561	\$ 499,250	3.9%
6 Intergovernmental	\$1,401,672	\$ 467,224	3.6%
7 Other Revenues	\$5,771,811	\$ 1,923,937	14.9%
Total funds	\$38,852,501	\$ 12,950,564	100.0%

*Blaine (2025) Lynden (2025) Ferndale (2024)

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Funding Support for BBIA's Mission

- **Focus:** Securing financial resources to support the exploration of Birch Bay's incorporation possibilities.
- **Key Responsibilities:**
 - Financial Planning and Fundraising
 - Budget Oversight
 - Donor Engagement
 - Operational Support
 - Compliance and Reporting

See meeting pamphlet for detailed Treasurer's Report

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Every dollar drives community engagement

- Zoom Meetings
- Meeting Room Rental
- Constant Contact Emails
- GoDaddy Website Hosting
- Marketing Materials
- Information Booth Fees
- Printed Materials
- Signage
- Mailbox

See meeting pamphlet for detailed Treasurer's Report

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Treasurer's Report for October 16 – November 17

- **Income: \$300.16**
- **Expenses:**
 - Zoom \$104.44
 - Rental \$100.00
 - Email \$88.13
 - Mailbox \$25.00
 - **TOTAL \$317.57**
- **Balance: \$3,924.24**



BIRCH BAY INCORPORATION ASSOCIATION

WECU—Blaine Branch

Treasurer's Report: October 16—November 17, 2025

Beginning Balance October 16, 2025 \$ 3,941.65

INCOME:		BALANCE:
October 29, 2025	C Shop Donation (Sept/Oct)	\$ 200.00
November 1, 2025	C Shop Donation (Nov)	100.00
DIVIDENDS:		
October 31, 2025		\$.16
TOTAL Income		\$ 300.16

EXPENSES:

October 18, 2025	Zoom.us	\$ 104.44
October 22, 2025	North Bay Church Rental check # 1023 (Oct.)	100.00
October 29, 2025	Constant Contact - Email Program	88.13
November 2, 2025	Birch Bay Storage-Mail Box	25.00
TOTAL Expenses		\$ 317.57

ACCOUNT BALANCE : November 17, 2025 \$ 3,924.24

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BBIA Revenues and Expenditures

- **Revenue: \$13,448.70**
 - Fundraising activities +
 - 29 individual donors
 - \$189 average donation
- **Expenses: \$9,903.78**

Revenues and Expenditures from April 1, 2024 to Oct. 31 2025

		%
Revenues		
<u>Birch Bay Community</u>		
1.1 Steering Committee Pledges	\$3,428.42	25.5%
1.2 Individual Donations	\$670.87	5.0%
1.3 Business & Stakeholder Donations	\$1,400.00	10.4%
1.4 Other (Event Parking & Bank Int)	\$2,949.41	21.9%
	\$8,448.70	62.8%
<u>Grants</u>		
2.1 Whatcom Foundation Neighborly Grant	\$5,000.00	37.2%
Total Revenues	\$13,448.70	100.0%
Expenditures		
<u>Association Meetings</u>		
1.1 Printing (Agenda, etc)	\$174.09	1.8%
1.2 Room & Equipment Rentals	\$1,600.00	16.2%
1.3 Zoom Meeting Webinars	\$1,805.10	18.2%
	\$3,579.19	36.1%
<u>Communications Committee</u>		
2.1 Website (Dreamhost/Constant Contact)	\$1,338.36	13.5%
2.2 Print, Mail & Postage (General)	\$2,334.12	23.6%
2.3 Community Outreach (General)	\$27.00	0.3%
2.4 Community Event Booth & Rentals	\$119.00	1.2%
2.5 Banners & Sign Boards	\$642.33	6.5%
	\$4,460.81	45.0%
<u>Research Committee</u>		
3.1 Community Surveys (Survey Monkey)	\$298.63	3.0%
3.2 Data Acquisition	\$654.15	6.6%
	\$952.78	9.6%
<u>Executive and Finance Committees</u>		
4.1 Banking and Financial Services	\$2.00	0.0%
4.2 Post Office Box	\$460.00	4.6%
4.3 Print, Mail & Postage (Stakeholders)	\$0.00	0.0%
4.4 Professional Services	\$449.00	4.5%
	\$911.00	9.2%
Total Expenditures	\$9,903.78	100.0%
Net Balance (Revenues - Expenditures)	\$3,544.92	

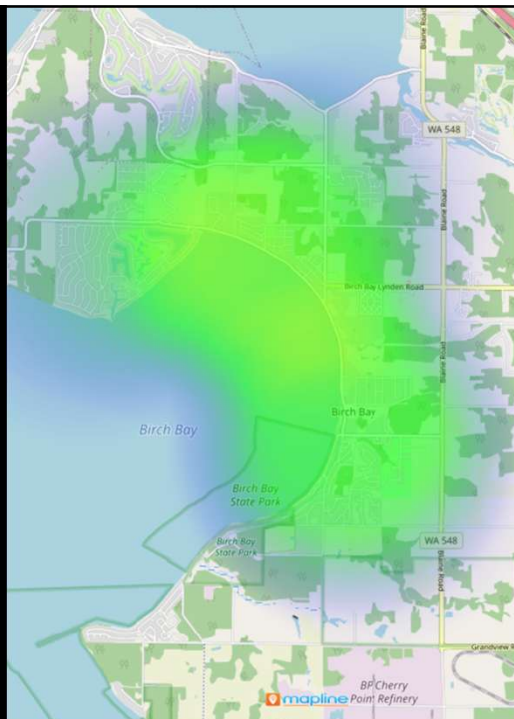
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9. BBIA Steering Committee Election

- The Steering Committee coordinates the activities of BBIA and fulfillment of mission
- Members serve terms of one year, without compensation
- The Steering Committee shall consist of 7 to 15 members
- Candidates will have 60 seconds to introduce themselves
- See handout for full statements



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Candidate #1: Michael Edward Rutkowski

Neighborhood: Hillsdale

Eligibility: I live within the current proposed boundaries

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Candidate #2: Lisa Guthrie

Neighborhood: Birch Point Village Reach

Eligibility: I live within the current proposed boundaries

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Candidate #3: Michael Stringam

Neighborhood: Birch Point Village Reach

Eligibility: I live within the current proposed boundaries

53




Candidate #4: Pauline Nefcy

Neighborhood: Central Reaches

Eligibility: I live within the current proposed boundaries

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Candidate #5: Jason Polverari

Neighborhood: Central Reaches

Eligibility: I live within the current proposed boundaries

55




Candidate #6: Matt Berry

Neighborhood: Cottonwood Reach

Eligibility: I live within the current proposed boundaries

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Candidate #7: Jan Barnes

Neighborhood: Cottonwood Reach

Eligibility: I live within the current proposed boundaries

57



Candidate #8: Patrick Alesse

Neighborhood: Central Reaches

Eligibility: I live within the current proposed boundaries

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Candidate #9: 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.)

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Candidate #10: Chuck Kinzer

Neighborhood: Cottonwood Reach

Eligibility: I live within the current proposed boundaries

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Candidate #11: Yorkson Jeen

Neighborhood: Birch Point Village Reach

Eligibility: I live within the current proposed boundaries

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Candidate #12: Sharman Burnam

Neighborhood: Central Reaches

Eligibility: I live within the current proposed boundaries

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Candidate #13: Carolyn Sherwin

Neighborhood: Central Reaches

Eligibility: I live within the current proposed boundaries

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Candidate #14: Hawkan Stephen

Neighborhood: Central Uplands

Eligibility: I live within the current proposed boundaries

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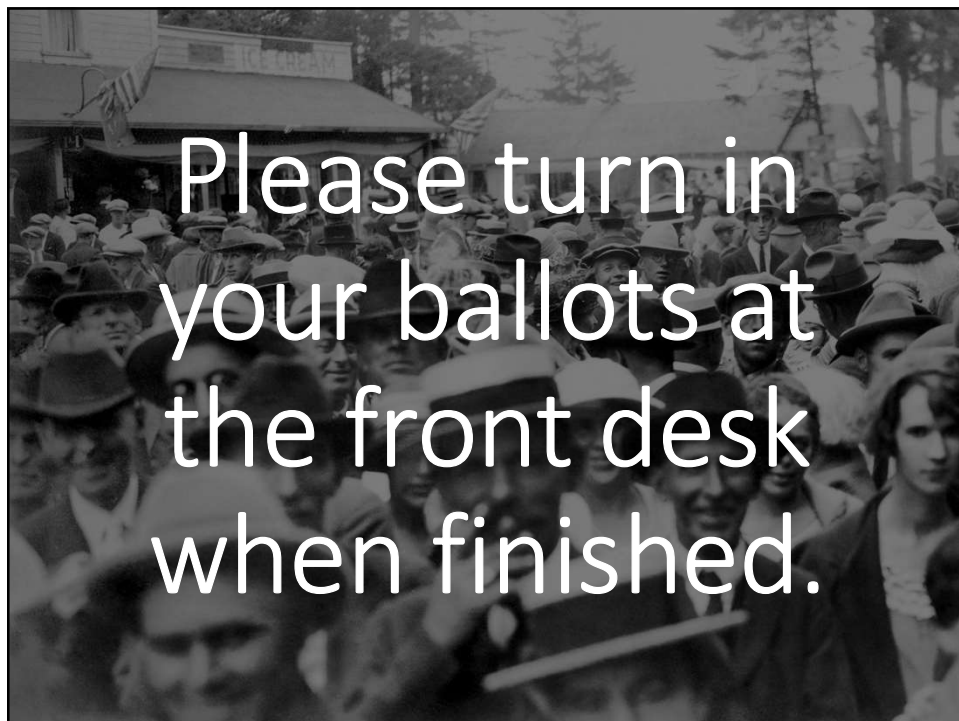


Candidate #15: Jeff Frank

Neighborhood: Cottonwood Reach

Eligibility: I live within the current proposed boundaries

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4. Open Session

(with remaining time)

Please state your name for the record and speak into the microphone so remote participants can hear your statement.

In the interest of keeping the meeting to a reasonable length, each speaker is allotted three minutes.

There will be an opportunity for questions at the end of each Committee Report.

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