

**Birch Bay Community Advisory Committee (BBCAC) Minutes**  
**January 20, 2026, 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM**  
**Birch Bay Community Bible Church: 4460 Bay Rd, Blaine, WA 98230**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Wilbrecht

**ROLL CALL:** All committee members present

Dave Wilbrecht; Bruce Ansell, Doralee Booth, Danielle Gaughen, Daniel Mead Smith  
Stephen Nelson, Sheila Wood

**COMMUNITY MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Lisa Guthrie; Matt Berry; Lisa Guthrie; Sharman Burnam; Chuck Kinzer Tim Thiessen;  
Patrick Alesse arrived around 5:30 PM

**COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:**

Bennett Knox – Whatcom County Parks & Recreation District

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES** *December 16th, 2025*

*Corrections to minutes:* Dwayne Engles should be corrected to Dwayne Englesman &  
Danielle Mead Smith should be corrected to Dann Mead Smith

Doralee motioned to approve minutes with changes, Dave seconded – No further  
discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

**AGENDA AMENDMENTS** No agenda amendments.

**OPEN SESSION FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

- **Lisa Guthrie** – Preparing an application to the post office for a unique zip code  
for Birch Bay to define us from Blaine.
  - Zip code boundaries can be reviewed at the request of the public.
  - Will need endorsements from local government officials.
  - Planning to reach out to County Government Officials, BBIA, BBCC &  
Birch Bay Chamber for letters of support.
  - Still working on what the boundaries of zip code would be, preferably CDP  
or UGA.

**COMMITTEE COMMENT PERIOD**

- **Bruce Ansell** – Representing the North Whatcom Fire District
  - At their next meeting the Fire District plans to set a rate for a levy lid lift. In  
January Fire Commissioners voted to run a lid lift in 2026.
  - 2006 was the last time the voters approved a levy rate for the fire district,  
and they are no longer able to keep up with inflation.
  - Planning for an August 2026 election.
  - Committee discussed wanting to have a state of the fire district at a future  
meeting.

**UPDATE FROM WHATCOM COUNTY STAFF**

- **Bennett Knox** – Whatcom County Parks and Recreation

- *Birch Bay Beach Park Developments*
    - Has budget authority & working on scope for cultural resources review a big part of the project.
    - Interested in coordinating with community on additional funding. Project has been value engineered to bring down costs but would like to work to find local funds of about \$500K for custom restroom facilities as planned.
    - Interested in new realistic goal setting, keeping in mind capacity.
  - *Multi-Modal Trails* – Department has a recent new hire: Karen Barringer
    - Gave an update on Bay to Baker Trail
    - Coast Millenium Trail – Renaming effort to Coast Salish Trail. Recreation Northwest is leading the effort on this project. Looking for funding, partners and engagement.
      - Suggested that Recreation Northwest may be a good presenter for a future BBCAC meeting.
      - CST has a connection to Birch Bay and new Horizons development in the Semiahmoo area.
  - *Comp Plan Update* – Map has been updated to show Coast Salish Trail & Bay Horizon Park (BBBPRD2)'s California Creek Park.
  - *Alderson Road End* – Still working on strategy to convert the road end to a park and solve the bathroom issue there. Current plan is for a porta-potty.
- Committee briefly discussed the shared streets law that had been brought up by community members in the past.

## REPORTS, PRESENTATIONS, DISCUSSIONS

### *Birch Bay Incorporation Association update on feasibility study*

**Matt Berry** – Introduced himself and then **Chuck Kinzer** who is on the Birch Bay Incorporation Steering Committee Chuck noted that he is currently neutral on the idea of incorporation but wanted to be involved in the process of learning more.

Chuck made a presentation to the committee regarding the Birch Bay Incorporation Feasibility Study which was recently finalized:

<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/106658/Birch-Bay-Incorporation-Feasibility-Study-Final-20251219?bidId=>

Chuck doesn't have a problem with the report itself or the assumptions of the consultants. He stated he has some disappointments regarding report.

- *In the final draft the consultants stated that incorporation wasn't feasible:*
  - Per their contract it was their role to provide the residents of Birch Bay with information, not a decision.

- It would be the role of Birch Bay resident to decide if incorporation is feasible or not.
- *There was a lack of scenarios provided:*
  - Per contract they were supposed to provide several scenarios. A previous draft had four scenarios.
  - Final draft provided one scenario, which was the least feasible.
- *Survey conducted by consultants:*
  - Survey was to be the basis of their budgeting process.
  - Results of survey showed policing to be 3<sup>rd</sup> highest concern of residents.
    - Higher items: land use/planning & traffic.
  - Regardless of those results the report utilized policing as the highest priority & doesn't really talk about the others.
- *Lack of considerations in the budget:*
  - New cities are eligible and first in-line for funding grants, which is legal and common practice for cities when putting together their budgets.
- *Consultants spoke exclusively with the City of Blaine as the best comparison:*
- *During public presentation consultants stated that they would be providing their model "very soon" which would be available for the community to test different assumptions.*
  - Chuck played a clip of the public presentation meeting and consultant stating just that.
  - Over a month later that model still isn't available.
  - Hopeful to have the support of the BBCAC in helping get the models.
- *Policing Issue: (Chuck provided page 30 of the report as a reference point)*
  - Largest Budget Item (\$200 – 270K = @ \$281K/officer)
  - Based on current budget funding and noted services wouldn't change
  - Consultants assumed that 9 officers would be needed for Birch Bay.
    - Current budget states staffing ratio for the Sheriff's office is .092 deputies/1000 residents with a population of 95,000+ (currently 90 commissioned officers).
  - Chuck provided many examples of the Sheriff's office highlighting our one dedicated Birch Bay Deputy and additional information of how the Sheriff's office serves the entire county, not just the unincorporated areas.

Chuck wrapped up his presentation with an ask of what he would like to see to make an informed decision. **1)** Budgets generated for a number of scenarios for a variety of items. **2)** Sales Tax Revenue Data – consultant's report may be well below averages across the state. (REET, Parks Special Revenue etc.) **3)** Model promised by the consultants **4)** An additional survey of residents to know more of what they want. **5)** Acknowledgement from County and Consultants that their report is one scenario and there could be others, and that the residents of Birch Bay should decide on feasibility.

Matt concluded that the BBIA is looking for support to ensure that the consultants fulfil the contract that they agreed to and echoed Chuck's desire to see the model, additional scenarios and more information on sales tax revenue.

Chair Wilbrecht asked Bennett Knox a handful of questions regarding how his department does reporting to inform the budget process looking to inform his thought process to attach \$'s to actions on the ground here in Birch Bay.

Committee discussed how they might be able to support this request.

- Highlighted importance of continuing to lobby our council and executive.
- Doralee motioned that 2 members of the BBCAC work with BBIA to create a letter to send to the county on behalf of the BBCAC regarding the feasibility study. Bruce Seconded.
- Discussion: Dann suggested this be kept simple, bullet point requests. Timing should be as soon as possible.
- **Doralee Booth and Danielle Gaughen volunteered to work together.**

## **2026 WORK PLAN & GOALS**

- *Regular Meetings:*
  - Tentatively planned for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM (7:30 PM preferred)
  - Danielle will work with Pastor Tim and the Church and confirm with the group.
- *Workplan:*
  - County Deliverables from Department Heads
  - Interjurisdictional Planning Group for Birch Point:
    - Developers
    - Public Works
    - Blaine & Birch Bay Stakeholders

## **OTHER BUSINESS:**

- Presentation to Council – Committee of the Whole – Danielle will reach out to County Staff and coordinate.
- Ferry District Bill SB-5839
- Danielle will forward BBCAC an email from Rep. Joe Timmons regarding Shared Streets Law – Danielle will email Rep. Timmons' contact and loop in the committee.

## **FUTURE DISCUSSIONS, ACTIONS, & AGENDA ITEMS:**

- Fire District – March 2026
- Port of Bellingham – Regarding Economic Development
- Department of Emergency Management/CERT – Disaster Planning

**ADJOURN at 7:20 PM**