

# Meeting Notes

date November 18, 2014  
to Kevin Thompson, Whatcom County Public Works Project Manager  
from Paul Agrimis  
subject November 8 Open House Meeting Notes

## Meeting Overview

Open House # 1 was held on November 8, 2014 at the Birch Bay Bible Community Church from 9-11. The meeting was attended by 105 people. There were six stations staffed as follows:

- Project Goals – Kevin Thompson, Whatcom County Public Works
- Project History & Cultural and Historic Resources – Roland Middleton, Whatcom County Public Works
- Flooding – Paul Agrimis, ESA
- Environmental Issues – Margaret Clancy, ESA
- Pedestrian Safety Issues – Allisa Carlson, ESA
- Berm Design – Jim Johannessen, Coastal Geologic Services.

There was a brief presentation by Paul Agrimis, Kevin Thompson, and Roland Middleton from 9:20 – 9:30 with an overview of the project. The high points were:

- The US Army Corps of Engineers excavated 200-300K cubic yards (CY) of Birch Bay gravel for the Blaine Air Force base and associated facilities from 1950-1952 that is understood to have created a sediment deficit in Birch Bay
- Storm tides since have regularly damaged the beaches, Birch Bay Drive, and adjacent businesses and residences
- Project has a 30-year Legacy – Whatcom County Public Works is implementing the Birch Bay community's project not a traditional roadway project or Public Works Project.
- Goal – Enhancing the beach for the community in a naturally sustainable way that meets multiple objectives (to be refined)
- Develop and complete project, with construction beginning in 2016
- Implement Wolf Bauer's design concepts
- Protect Birch Bay Drive
- Improve Pedestrian Safety
- Enhance Shoreline Access
- Consider Cultural Resources

Many comments were received at the stations (12 sheets), and comments were received in the comment box as well. Following are summaries of comments from each of the stations.

### Project Goals Comments Summary

Topic	Comments
Bike Paths	Bike path is needed to make safer a very dangerous situation of the crowded sharing of the road shoulder (multiple comments). Bike path must be separated from traffic and allow two-direction bicycle traffic.
Birch Bay Drive	People drive well above the posted speed limit of 25 mph and that creates a dangerous condition for pedestrians and bicyclists. Make Birch Bay Drive a one-way northbound local access road (from Harborview to Shintaffer with the southbound lane for pedestrians and bicycles (multiple comments).
Tourism/Business	Greater than 60% of business occurs during the off-season, and year-round business makes all seasons important.
Groins	Groins should be removed; not just covered up (multiple comments).

### Project History & Cultural and Historic Resources Comments Summary

Topic	Comments
Pedestrian Path	The walkway should not be asphalt.
Berm	Repair damage to existing berm ASAP as a maintenance request.
Tourism/Business	Underground the utilities to improve views and make the berm more of a “destination feature”.
Utilities	Underground the utilities (multiple comments). A tide gate is needed at Lora Lane. A stormwater outfall is needed at Mariner’s Cove.
Groins	Groins should be removed.

### Flooding Comments Summary

Topic	Comments
Pedestrian Path	Please mow shoulder from Cottonwood Drive to Cedar Lane to remove blackberries and make it safe for pedestrians (multiple comments).
Berm	Extend project north to include removing bulkhead at Cedar Lane and Birch Way (multiple comments).
Tourism/Business	Provide more waterfront seating for citizens and tourists to enjoy the waterfront views. Provide interpretive signage to point out important sites and historic information about Captain Vancouver landing, shellfish, etc. Protect and wrap restaurant, which is a historic property, with berm.

<b>Flooding Comments Summary – cont.</b>	
Utilities	Underground the utilities (multiple comments).
Groins	Break up the groins (multiple comments).
Process	Form a Citizens Advisory Committee to share information and to provide education about the project.  Engage with Whatcom County Parks to provide benches and seating along the waterfront.

**Environmental Issues Comments Summary**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Birch Bay Drive	Extend project north (See Picture 3 on Flood Zone Figure) to where the worst erosion is jeopardizing the road and loss of beach.  Does the project address the entire Birch Bay beach area, even south of the test project?  Fix the tide gates on the Lora Lane tributary.  The Clubhouse Drive culvert is eroding the banks and it needs reinforcement or redesign.
Berm	Who will be responsible for the long-term maintenance of the new soft-shore beach?  Is it done yet?
Natural Resources	How are the shellfish doing, and are there plans to restore the oysters?
Tourism/Business	Business owners are behind this project because it benefits the local economy.  Are you installing pre-fab pads for the restroom facilities?  What are the plans for the <u>three</u> public bathroom facilities?  The Bay Center Market is a potential resource for a bathroom due to the existing underground utilities.  Did the project consider purchasing property for the public bathroom facilities?  Do not bury established boat launch at Cedar Lane, and please include the cost to restore/rehabilitate this launch as part of the project.  Please restore the Terrell Creek launch.  Where will the small craft outlet/launching spots be?  Maintain the public Right of Way to beach access across the berm with emphasis at the new County property.

<b>Environmental Issues Comments Summary – cont.</b>	
Utilities	Please move utilities underground (multiple). Please change lighting fixtures from cobra head to something less obtrusive and more focused on specific ground areas.
Process	Stay engaged with the community, this is a great format. Circle back with presentation to the Chamber of Commerce.

**Pedestrian Safety Issues Comments Summary**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Pedestrian Path	Concerned with protecting privacy/access to the beach in front of the Golden Tides complex – will this area be signed private? Shoulder needs mowing of blackberries at north end (multiple). Enhance shoulder at north end to make pedestrian experience pleasant and safe. Trail should be paved to attract tourism.
Bike Paths	Make sure that bike traffic circulation is clearly communicated to stakeholders/public.
Birch Bay Drive	Tide gate not working at Lora Lane.
Berm	Purchase Via Restaurant to provide continuity/proper berm protection (multiple). Wrap berm around the Via Restaurant (multiple). Don't spend public money on protecting Via Restaurant. Concerned that soft shore berm beach material would be soft enough for bare feet and general public access. Will the new berm be high enough if it is similar to the 1,000 feet of the existing berm? Barging in the gravel is a good idea for reducing traffic and maintaining road condition. Gravel needs to be maintained.
Tourism/Business	Where will small boats tie up with the new soft shore berm design? We need more restrooms! Widen berm to provide area for more restaurants and businesses.
Utilities	Underground the utilities (multiple comments). Concerned that utility guy wires and poles are a safety issue to bicyclists, especially kids.

Topic	Comments
	Could a new conduit bank/vault be installed under the new berm pedestrian path that could be used for relocated phone and power in the future?

**Berm Design Comments Summary**

Topic	Comments
Pedestrian Path	Include walking path.
Bike Paths	Include bicycle path.
Berm	<p>Flood hazard reduction is desired.</p> <p>Beach nourishment is needed prior to 2016 for storm damage reduction.</p> <p>Birch Bay marina channel dredge sediment is a possible source of nourishment sediment for the berm.</p> <p>Cobble sediment added by Terrell Creek berm in the past was too hard to walk on.</p> <p>Has the berm system been implemented elsewhere, and does it have a proven track record of successful erosion management?</p> <p>Maintain views from houses and the road.</p> <p>Add the Point Whitehorn to Birch Bay State Park Coastal Geology report to the County web site.</p> <p>Beach has accreted 2-3 feet in recent decades in the North Cottonwood area.</p> <p>Has there been due consideration for the south end of Birch Bay beyond the project site for potential impacts?</p>
Natural Resources	Clams have decreased both north and south of Terrell Creek.
Utilities	Underground the utilities (multiple).
Groins	Groins should be removed.
Process	Can we form a Local Improvement District (LID) to help get the utilities underground?