

**From:** Pamela Sweet

**Sent:** Wednesday, May 5, 2021 7:28 PM

**To:** City Council; Richard May; Bonnie Onyon; Garth Baldwin; Charlie Hawkins; Mary Lou Steward; Eric Davidson; Sukhwant Gill

**CC:** Tara C Gilbert; Google

**Subject:** 05 10 21 Blaine City Council Meeting: Proposed Rooney Annexation

Dear Mayor Onyon & Blaine City Council Members,

Re: Proposed Rooney Annexation meeting rescheduled on May 10, 2021

Pursuant to the notice & posted documents we have the following questions & comments:

- 1. GMA & Annexation:** As we understand the Growth Management Act, the legislative framework primary guiding criteria is prevention of urban sprawl. According to the staff report “the Comprehensive Plan demonstrates that the existing incorporated UGA is of sufficient size to accommodate 20 year growth projections”

Given the above, why is circumventing the governing principals of the GMA being considered at all?
- 2. Annexation Criteria:** If there is no population growth pressure then what is the justification for this proposed expansion? The laws for annexation explicitly outline annexation primary purpose is to accommodate validated growth. Blaine for the past 5 years has grown by less than 100 people per year. Even as imprecise & unreliable as population projections are, in more than decade Blaine will still not have reached capacity requiring expansion beyond the existing incorporated borders. In fact, according to Whatcom Planning Blaine has the most undeveloped an under-developed land within its existing urban growth area of any city in the county!
- 3. The 60% annexation method:** By law, this method requires owners of 60% of the land value, as determined by current property assessments to support the proposal. It is unclear that the city acting with Power of Attorney for the other property involved meets the minimum requirements outlined by the statute. Without express consent by the actual owners of 60% of the land value, does this annexation method even apply? Can the city by proxy satisfy the ownership requirement of the 60% method? In this situation, would not one of the other annexation processes stipulated by the statute be the correct application method?
- 4. Interlocal Agreement Section 6A:** Pursuant to the letter written by Thomas Frey, would Blaine not have an obligation to assume responsibilities for the entire right of way on Harborview Dr, Crest Dr. & Terrace because of the proposed abutting access point for the development? If so, wouldn't annexation of the entire street require inclusion of all the impacted property owners & voters in Harborview Heights? In all methods of annexation (with some exceptions like for municipal purposes) the immediately impacted parties are included in the decision-making process (direct petition or election).
- 5. Environmental Impact:** Has a wetland assessment been completed for the parcel in question? It is saturated with groundwater for much of the year seeing bird migration & a seasonal duck population. We wonder if the protection of an environmentally sensitive area had anything to do with Whatcom County's rejection of this proposal, or whether this issue has even been assessed?
- 6. Code Violation:** We noticed tree removal but were not aware the developer had failed to obtain the requisite approval & permits. It seems ridiculous that council would approve any initiative proposed by an individual with such blatant disregard for the governing authority & restitution should be made.
- 7. Zoning:** Does the proposed multi-family development require a rezoning? If so, should there not be public consultation in conjunction with the adjudication of the annexation process. Surely citizens & directly impacted owners should have a voice in any rezoning. In absence of which any development should be constrained to the existing & prevailing single family residential zoning.
- 8. Traffic Mitigation:** As suggested by other residents, if the developer is insistent on an incongruous multi-family development project, then an alternative transit route through his existing right of way to H street should be considered as a viable alternative. This route is more direct to collector & arterial paths that would maintain safety for Harborview Heights... as our street was not designed or intended to handle double the traffic created by a disproportionately dense project.
- 9. Community Benefit:** Surely a proposed development that will have detrimental impacts to the immediate area residents & home values should attempt to offset loss with an investment for the greater community good. Are there any additional public amenities or resources being proposed by the developer in exchange for concessions & a density bonus? If not, then why not? From what we understand the proposed development is completely inconsistent with the character & quality of the neighborhood and promises nothing of value to the existing owners & voters.
- 10. Lack of Community Support:** As demonstrated by the petition circulated by Clyde Findley the majority of the neighborhood (greater than 60%) are not in support of annexation of the Rooney property and by extension the neighborhood in general. One of the important principals of the GMA is annexation should proceed only when support is evident to the proximate owners & voters. The developer has failed to identify an actual need in the city & any material benefit for annexation other than to himself...which is no doubt a significant factor in the collective neighborhood objection.

It may seem exciting from some perspective to expand borders in an area that has not experienced that since 1996. However, the likely reason it has not happened is that it is not necessary. While there exists an obligation for long term planning by the city, the population situation (vacancy rates etc) has not substantively changed. The background report does not provide validated information to substantiate otherwise. Development for the sake of development is not progress, it is nonsense. Simply an interesting proposal, a developer's persistence or some far-off vague notion of a possible future is not a valid reason for annexation today. Any process that fails to follow the legislative & regulatory framework and makes exceptions for an individual developer would likely be challenged by Harborview Heights. We feel the city would be best served by focusing resources on stimulating growth within the vast undeveloped incorporated area & supporting the preservation, enhancement & revitalization of the existing neighborhoods within Blaine.

Sincerely,

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