

#1. Dear Editor,

Why are voters being asked to fund a \$4M elementary expansion of 8 classrooms onto the Primary School on the Blaine campus when the 2010 US Census for Birch Bay (Census Designated Place – CDP) records a population of 8,413, growing 70% since 2000? Blaine grew 24% to a population of 4,684 in 2010. Over the last 20 years, the increase in the number of children ages 0-17 in Birch Bay has grown over 3 times that of Blaine: 1,217 to 368. Projected population growth over the next 20 years reflects similar numbers.

Approximately 60% of the 2,004 students in the Blaine School District come from the Birch Bay area. The existing Blaine School District facilities do not reflect the realities of where the students live, and more importantly, the residents of Birch Bay are not being properly represented or served. Eight additional classrooms added to the Primary School on the Blaine campus will simply delay addressing the need for a school in Birch Bay. How long will Birch Bay students continue to spend hours on a school bus being transported to the northern periphery of the School District? All day kindergarten classes would be welcome in Birch Bay!

Concerned Birch Bay citizen,

Claudia Hollod

#2. Dear Editor,

Did you know that the Blaine School District owns 98 acres of land and 300,000 sq. feet of school facilities all located in

Blaine? The School District owns 0 acres of land and has 0 sq. feet of facilities in Birch Bay where 60% of the students live. The 38 acre campus facility in Blaine houses a primary school, an elementary school, a middle school and gymnasium, a high school and gymnasium and the technical school. The outside play areas include tennis courts, basketball courts, softball and baseball diamonds, practice football and soccer fields, and a quarter mile synthetic track and football field at the stadium.

The 60-acre Blaine Schools Pipeline Athletic Complex off-site in Blaine consists of: 3 soccer fields, 4 softball fields, and 2 baseball fields. The School District owns: 0 school facilities, 0 soccer fields, 0 softball fields, and 0 baseball fields in the Birch Bay area. Birch Bay athletes must be transported back to the Blaine campus or Pipeline Field to practice after school sports on teams and leagues.

The City of Blaine Comprehensive Plan states: “The central location of the Blaine campus minimizes the need for car and bus transportation within the City.” Not so for Birch Bay area students who are bussed for 13 years to the Blaine Campus. How long will Birch Bay elementary students continue to spend hours on a school bus being transported from the southern periphery to the very northern periphery of the School District? This is detrimental to the development of young children, their families and community.

When considering siting of essential public facilities, the Birch Bay Community Plan states: “Equitable distribution of public facilities should occur so that no one jurisdiction assumes more than their fair share.” The 20 year \$45M Blaine capital bond

proposal offers nothing to address this inequity. Public schools are intimately linked with communities. That “community thing” created by neighborhood schools is a concrete civic asset that should not be undervalued. Birch Bay should not have to wait another 15-20 years for an educational facility in our community.

Retired Teacher,
Corey Priddy
Birch Bay

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#3. Dear Editor,

If voters approve the 20-year \$45 million capital bond initiative on February 10th, the taxpayers of the school district will have contributed \$82 million since 1992 for school property, facilities and infrastructure in Blaine. Zero capital bond tax dollars have been spent in Birch Bay for school property, infrastructure or facilities.

A significant population shift has occurred over the past 20 years in the Blaine School District. Currently 60% of the students in the District come from the Birch Bay area. According to Supt. Spanjer, the projected enrollment in the District was expected to increase by 600 students in the last decade, but actual enrollment numbers went down since the 2004-05 school year, from 2,235 to 2,120. That represents a decline for some of the district but not for Birch Bay. In the last

decade, according to the US Census, a significant population increase of 660 children occurred in Birch Bay compared to an increase of 3 children in Blaine. Basically, the growth in the number of children in Birch Bay has kept the Blaine School District from having a much larger decrease in the number of children over the last 20 years.

Birch Bay pays the highest contribution to the School District capital bond in local tax dollars. Approximate percentages of tax contributions to the capital bond in 2014 include: Birch Bay - 36%; City of Blaine - 24%; Pt. Roberts - 16%; Rural County (including BP) - 24%. (Tax information calculated from the Whatcom County Annual Tax Book)

In last week's Northern Light article regarding the bond issue, Supt. Ron Spanjer, the Blaine City Council and City Manager Dave Wilbrecht all agreed that besides the educational benefits "there might be some real economic benefit because quality schools and facilities tend to draw business and growth to the area. Businesses coming in want to see what's going on with schools in their community." So far, nothing is going on with schools in the Birch Bay community! It's TIME for the Blaine School District to begin to invest tax dollars in the Birch Bay community for these very same reasons.

Doralee Booth, Chair
A School for Birch Bay Committee
Birch Bay Community Plan