



CITY OF BLAINE

CITY COUNCIL

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April 14, 2021

Subject: Proposed Drayton Harbor No Shooting Zone

Honorable Councilmembers:

This letter is submitted in support of the City of Blaine's request to establish a no shooting zone on the unincorporated areas of Drayton Harbor. On July 8, 2019 the Blaine City Council voted unanimously to adopt Resolution 1765-19 requesting the Whatcom County Council to establish a no shooting zone pursuant to Whatcom County Code 9.32.

The City has 5700 residents, many of whom live in the neighborhoods that ring the harbor. The Semiahmoo Uplands, the Semiahmoo Spit resort area, Downtown Blaine, the Salishan neighborhood and the Montfort Park neighborhood contain hundreds of homes and many businesses in close proximity to the harbor. The water and shores are the focus of much activity. With two marinas, several launch points for kayaks, canoes, and paddleboards, public beaches, parks and trails, the shoreline and harbor attract many visitors. Blaine is not a sparsely populated rural area, but is an active urban environment - and Drayton Harbor sits in the middle.

The Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan and the City of Blaine Comprehensive Plan identify Blaine as one of the fastest growing urban areas (UGA) for the 2016-2036 planning period. This planned growth is welcomed by the City, and we know that it will increase recreational pressure on the shoreline and water of Drayton Harbor. Due to past urban growth area planning decisions, portions of the harbor are in the City and portions are in the unincorporated County, with the unincorporated areas generally lying within and bounded by the areas within the city limits. The attached map illustrates the jurisdictional geography of the harbor.

This is an issue of public safety as there are many people who live on the shoreline, who recreate on the shore, and who recreate on the water. As the area becomes more urban, there is more pressure on the area for recreation. Kayakers and canoers do in fact use the harbor in the winter when the water is calm. Bird watchers frequent the area. Residents and visitors enjoy the beaches at all times of year. As the area becomes more urban, the interaction between the population and those who are shooting inevitably increases.

It is not just an issue of actual public safety, but also of perceived safety, or mental wellbeing. If people are concerned and fear for themselves and for their children, this has an adverse impact on their welfare. While some may have testified that this is a noise issue, let us assure you for us it is not. It is a real and perceived public safety issue.

This organization is an Equal Opportunity Provider

There are 22 other no shooting zones in the County, including Wiser Lake. Wiser Lake is an interesting example because there are similarities to Blaine's situation. There are homes surrounding the lake but at lower density and fewer people than we have living around Drayton Harbor. If the shooting restriction is good for Wiser Lake, why isn't it good for Drayton Harbor with an urban area surrounding it?

Over the years, the City has received numerous requests by citizens to stop the shooting on the harbor. These come in the form of direct contact to individual City councilmembers, letters to the editor, comment at Council meetings, calls to staff, and occasional calls for service to the Police Department. The city staff and the Council have only been able to reply that shooting is legal only in the county portion of the harbor (which is a surprise to most that the county has any jurisdiction at all), and that this is out of our hands. It is, however, in your hands, as county elected representatives for the citizens of Blaine. Another facet that makes this dual-jurisdiction area problematic is that, on the water, how can the hunters know where the 'boundary' line is?

There is also a matter of self-determination. In the past the City did not act to annex the entire harbor, and due to decisions made by the County to shrink the Blaine UGA, the City cannot take proactive steps to resolve the issue on our own. We require your help.

We are hoping you will understand the importance of this situation to our community and will agree that the time has come to establish a no shooting zone on Drayton Harbor. We would also ask for the same consideration for the Dearborn Avenue area, which is immediately adjacent to our city limits, is part of our UGA, and considered very much a part of the Blaine community.

Respectfully,



Bonnie Onyon,
Mayor

Attachments:
City of Blaine Resolution 1765-19
Map of Harbor

RESOLUTION NO. 1765-19

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLAINE, WASHINGTON, TO SEEK DESIGNATION OF ALL UNINCORPORATED PORTIONS OF DRAYTON HARBOR AQUATIC AREA, TIDELANDS AND SHORELINE AS A NO SHOOTING ZONE PURSUANT TO WHATCOM COUNTY CODE 9.32 .

Whereas, portions of the Drayton Harbor aquatic area, tidelands and shoreline are within the city limits, and

Whereas, portions of Drayton Harbor aquatic area, tidelands and shoreline are within Whatcom County jurisdiction, and

Whereas, hunting and the discharge of firearms is prohibited in the city limits, and

Whereas, it is difficult for members of the public to distinguish between incorporated and unincorporated areas particularly on the open water, which causes numerous hunters to inadvertently move into areas where hunting and discharge of firearms is illegal, and

Whereas, our citizens have expressed concerns about gunfire near homes and property and repeatedly call for police response to such incidents, and

Whereas, unincorporated portion of Drayton Harbor aquatic area, tidelands and shoreline are within and adjacent to urban growth areas, and

Whereas, population is expanding and housing density is increasing within the areas surrounding Drayton Harbor both within the City and an areas or unincorporated Whatcom County,

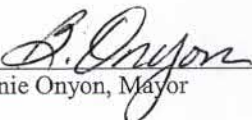
Whereas, the Revised Code of Washington (RCW 36.32.120) provides Whatcom County authority to designate no shooting zones, and

Whereas, Whatcom County Code Section 9.32 "Unlawful Discharge of Firearms" designates twenty-two no shooting zones, most lying within and adjacent to cities, urban growth areas and other locations of higher density development,

Now therefore, the City Council of the City of Blaine hereby resolves to seek designation of all the aquatic areas and tidelands within Drayton Harbor located within Whatcom County as a no shooting zone pursuant to Whatcom County Code Section 9.32.

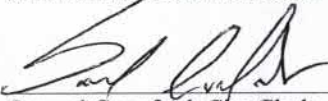
PASSED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BLAINE, WASHINGTON, on the 8th day of July, 2019, and approved by the Mayor on the same day.

CITY OF BLAINE, WASHINGTON



Bonnie Onyon, Mayor

ATTEST/AUTHENTICATE:



Samuel Crawford, City Clerk



City Limits

City Limits

Proposed No Shooting Zone