

Bob and Lois Franco
8656 Great Horned Owl Lane
Blaine, WA 98230
360.392.8455 ~ fax: 360.392.1888

Monday, July 10, 2006

To the Blaine City Council:

We present this letter this evening to ask the City Council for their support on two issues:

- 1) We ask the full Council for it's support by adopting, this evening, the Petition now submitted to the Council which asks for an immediately effective, temporary moratorium on the submission or acceptance of applications for further development - especially PUDs or multi-family developments, and building permits, *and:*
- 2) We ask for the full Council's vote to deny the application submitted by Trillium/Gepetto for development of Seagrass "Cottages" II.

These requests go hand in hand; it is a call for our Council Members to represent the best interests of the community and the citizens they represent in a manner that will enable the City to get it's bearings and proceed with a coherent plan for the overall development of this community, *that the community can support and has confidence in.*

As we have attended Planning Commission and Council meetings, talked with folks from all over the area, and watched the progress of developments in Blaine and in the county near by, we see developers shoving forward with their development plans without considering the impact of those plans on the community as a whole.

While we do believe that in most cases, property owners/developers have a right to build on the property they have purchased for development, we *do not* believe that right exists to the significant detriment of a community, and we believe that developers should preserve to the extent possible the amenities of the property and the beauty that we treasure as unique to our area.

The Planning Commission and Council are between the proverbial "rock and a hard place". They know that the developers have the staff, the time, the financial wherewithal, and the self interest to sue the City, and maybe it's employees, if the outcome of a proposal for development is not approved or does not progress as they believe it should. And that can always be their recourse. We have heard explicit references by developers to suits in these chambers. And of course, the City must weigh the possible costs of whatever legal action might be taken - attorneys' fees, possible losses, and penalties. It sometimes costs the City money, and the fear of that, with Blaine, is what makes Blaine so vulnerable to wanting to find a way to satisfy the developer when other standards would lead to a disapproval of an application.

But making decisions about important matters - such as devastation of the Spit - relying heavily on hoping to avoid a law-suit - is tantamount to succumbing to extortion or blackmail. The developers who come here know that Blaine is *not* in a fiscally strong position and that lawsuits have a serious financial impact. But the developers do not care about the impact of their actions on the citizens or the City. We need to keep that in mind.

We need to ask: what is the **PUBLIC**'s interest? *More* homes when there already is insufficient infrastructure to support them? We in West Blaine already are public safety/emergency response "challenged." We do NOT enjoy the confidence or assurance that when we call 911, an emergency response will be timely. More homes and families will only further *diminish* the level of emergency service available.

Because of the overwhelming demands on the City staff to process the many applications for development, other critical areas of responsibility have necessarily been relegated to a lower priority and delay. Everyone complains that our community hasn't been successful in it's ' economic development, but haven't the same staff who at least *theoretically* are responsible for economic development been the *same* staff who have handled all the processing related to applications for development and associated activity? It is *inconceivable* that the staff has time for any significant outreach to seek out and encourage businesses to come to Blaine.

It's easy to blame building restrictions for the lack of downtown development, and that perhaps has been one element. But when interested business owners want to come to Blaine, and problems like lack of sufficient parking can't be resolved because the City doesn't have time to work on it due to the priority applications for PUDs gets, Blaine will continue to have a problem with economic development. We need to slow down, get caught up, and proceed responsibly.

A temporary moratorium - even if it's only 90 days - would enable the City to address some of the other needs and requirements that have been put on hold. It would enable the City develop a plan to proceed.

Blaine, due to the good and very hard work of the City Manager and staff, barely DID meet the requirements for the update to the Comprehensive Plan. BUT, during that process, there were many elements that were left out for future consideration because of time constraints. The Semiahmoo "neighborhood" Master Plan was one of these elements that got left behind. That plan has, for all the 25 years it's been in place required periodic updates. The last one was in 1996, *TEN* years ago. Other things have always been a priority and now the failure update the Plan is hurting us. I must assume that Trillium was in no hurry to entertain or open the Plan to possible revisions. We now hear that Trillium agrees that there should be an update. How can they not? But the Seagrass and Carnoustie developments, along with Inverness, Gleneagles II, and who knows what others, are already "out of the gate" so to speak.

It's seriously past the time for a review and update of the remainder of the Blaine

Comprehensive Plan, which includes the Semiahmoo Master Plan to be completed. But IN THE INTERIM, UNTIL THE REVISIONS IN THAT PLAN ARE APPROVED, there should be **no further approvals of PUDs or proposal submissions accepted**, and no building permits issued.

We didn't realize until recently that until the Semiahmoo Company/Trillium purchased the property that is now Semiahmoo and the Spit, the previous master plan envisioned the Resort and some accompanying shops, but DID NOT PERMIT ANY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT. Who knows what happened, that the City Council then agreed to such incredible density and mass to be built, especially on the Spit, but they did. Now we are fighting a Plan that *permits up to 375* living units and many thousands more commercial square feet, and an 800 slip marina on the Spit. With the current Master Plan, when Trillium applies for development, it becomes the City's burden to "just say no" *as long as the current Plan remains unrevised*. Or the City will get sued.

Without revisions to the City's Comprehensive Plan (including The Semiahmoo Master Plan), that will reflect the current *community's and public's best interests* as compared to the developer's, only, NOTHING more should be approved by this City Council.

Earlier this year we've seen changes made in the plans and zoning for neighborhoods in downtown Blaine. We deserve to be able to finish that process before there are further approvals for development in the City, and assurances that our public safety and emergency services, and the other concerns included in the Petition submitted tonight, are IN PLACE before further development is takes place.

We're asking the full City Council this evening to:

- 1) Move and vote to accept and grant the Petition for a temporary moratorium that will take effect immediately. This will require the City to decline acceptance of new submissions for development pending the City's response to the concerns of the Petition, It will enable the Staff to focus their efforts on other essential aspects of the City's responsibility and obligations to it's citizens, such as continuing the process of the updating of the City's Comprehensive Plan (including the Semiahmoo Master Plan)... and
- 2) Adopt the recommendation to deny the Seagrass "Cottages" II application for development on the Semiahmoo Spit, made by the Planning Commission to the City Council.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully yours,


Bob and Lois Franco.