

Comments to the Blaine City Council, August 13, 2007

I would like to explain my letter to Mr. Douglas supporting the name change from Drayton Harbor to Blaine Harbor. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on an issue that I have been involved with on and off for the last seven years....most of which was as a resident of Blaine.

I hope that my not being a resident will give you a reason to disregard or disclaim the value of my remarks as it has done with some individuals. I hope that it is not the case this evening. Many issues unfortunately seem to be decided by personality or residence rather than the value of the person or idea to the City.

While a member of the Blaine Chamber of Commerce, I participated in the effort to work on the preliminaries of downtown revitalization and was involved in the not so near success of the addition of Harbor to the name of the City, some years ago.

As a promoter of our tourism attractions around Semiahmoo Bay, Drayton Harbor and Birch Bay, names are increasingly important to identify either attractions or locations of them. The "Necklace," a term I believe, created by Blaine's City Manager, notes that **Blaine** is at the center, as is **The Port of Bellingham at Blaine Harbor, which is also a part of the City of Blaine**, as well. Like the Peace Arch Park, we often overlook the significance of its attraction to others.

I have worked for several years with the Blaine and Birch Bay Chambers to promote tourism in our area. On many occasions I have heard visitors and residents alike refer to this unique feature separating the two sections of Blaine, as **Blaine Harbor**....referring to where they see the boats or keep them.

Unlike some others, I see our two communities inexorably connected in many ways relating to our general welfare and future growth. Like the Peace Arch Park, we all are beneficiaries of the hard work many have done or do, to bring people to visit and live in our community.

Retaining the name of an English seaman or officer, given to the small body of water by the famous explorer and navigator, Captain George Vancouver, in the 1790's, no longer serves your community well. I would rather see it honor the name of James G. Blaine. The same person, who by vote of earlier residents, lent his name to this city, Blaine, Washington....just as he did to 4 other towns.

Birch Bay, has become a vacation and tourist attraction, partly because of the name that brings back fond memories of the past, but also because of it being easily identified as being on a body of water. Blaine, like Birch Bay, shares the unique position as being virtually on or nearer the water than any other spot on I-5, all the way from San Diego north to the Canadian Border.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "John J. Choulocha". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" and last name "Choulocha" clearly legible.