

Marcia F. Williams
16300 Agate Point Road N.E.
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

January 19, 2017

Olivia Sontag, Planner
Department of Planning and Community Development
280 Madison Avenue North
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

Re: Bloedel Reserve Parking SPR – PLN50734 SPR

Dear Ms. Sontag and the Department of Planning and Community Development,

I have been a resident of Agate Point since 1980. During this time I have observed the transition of the Bloedel property from a private residence to a beautiful garden that is open to the public. The Bloedel Reserve is a wonderful resource. The residents of Agate Point appreciate the Reserve. However, I and other neighbors are concerned about the Reserve's Proposal for revision of the entrance and exit to the Reserve.

In considering the impact of the Proposal, it is necessary to recognize that the Reserve is currently expanding its programs, resources, and attendance. The "Bloedel Reserve Fall 2016 Year in Review" report states that revenue from admissions increased from **\$262,680 in 2014 to \$352,161 in 2015**, a 35% increase in 1 year! The report, written in early fall 2016, said *"While 2015 was a record year for attendance, this year we have already topped it."* In addition to providing more programs each year, the long-term plan for the Reserve includes remodeling the Gatehouse to include a Teahouse restaurant and developing new areas in the Reserve for visitors. So, in reviewing the current Proposal, it is important to realize that Reserve vehicular traffic on Dolphin and Agatewood Roads, and at the intersection of Agatewood and Highway 305, has increased dramatically in recent years **and will continue to increase**. Although the Proposal states that there will be no increase in the number of parking sites in the area under review, this area is currently a meadow that is used only for overflow parking when the existing parking areas are filled. By transforming this meadow into an established paved/graveled parking area, the Proposal appears to be increasing the overall number of regular-use parking sites within the Reserve.

The Proposal presents several threats to the safety of local residents, including pedestrians, cyclists, children and drivers, as well as hazards for visitors to the Bloedel Reserve.

1. The Proposal indicates that traffic exiting the Reserve will enter Agate Point Road, turn left across 2 lanes of traffic and then proceed around a very sharp curve onto Dolphin Road. The curve between Agate Point Road and Dolphin Road is notoriously hazardous. Two months ago, a driver went off the road and crashed into the Reserve property. During autumn/winter months, the curve remains icy throughout the day because it is shaded. And, throughout the year, in addition to local residential vehicle traffic, there are frequently walkers, joggers, runners, cyclists also attempting to go around the

curve. The proposed traffic revision raises risks for pedestrians, in addition to the likelihood of vehicular collisions. In order to address neighbors' concerns, the Reserve has told residents that a "speed bump" may be installed on Agate Point Road. This would only increase congestion of traffic in this area.

2. The Proposal Narrative states that the *"new exit onto Agate Point Road ... will limit car backups outside the gate."* It is not evident how the new exit will influence the backup of cars onto Dolphin Road (sometimes as many as 6 or more), which can be a major problem for local vehicular traffic and local pedestrians who have to move into the opposite lane of traffic to avoid the line of cars. In my experience, the back-up of cars onto Dolphin Road appears to be primarily due to: 1) visitors who arrive early before the Reserve is open; 2) the entry process at the gate in which a representative of the Reserve comes out of the Gatehouse to meet each vehicle, documents the visitors, assigns fees, directs the driver where to park, and then opens the gate; or 3) when there are major events at the Reserve. Exiting cars do not appear to contribute to the back-up of vehicles on Dolphin Road.

3. The "Loop" is traditionally a route for walkers, joggers, runners, dog-walkers, cyclists, parents with strollers, and other pedestrians. Also, Bainbridge Island School buses and Kitsap Transit buses pick up and discharge passengers along Dolphin Road and Agatewood Road. The increased traffic to and from the Reserve presents a hazard for all pedestrians. Dolphin Road and Agatewood Road are narrow 2-lane roads without shoulders. So, when vehicles pass, pedestrians have to step out of the road into the brush at the side of the road. Local drivers tend to slow and give right-of-way to pedestrians and cyclists; drivers unfamiliar with the road do not. The Reserve documents state that traffic to and from the Reserve is primarily confined to 10:00 – 4:00, Tuesday through Sunday. However, in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of events at the Reserve that occur in the late afternoons and evenings.

4. The intersection of Agatewood Road and Highway 305 is a very dangerous entrance of traffic onto and off of the highway. Within the past 2 weeks, 2 major collisions have occurred in the immediate area (one fatal). Traffic to and from the Bloedel Reserve contributes to this hazardous intersection. Visitors to the Reserve who are driving southbound on Hwy 305 and turning left from the highway onto Agatewood impede local access to the highway. Visitors leaving the Reserve who are turning left onto the highway from Agatewood add to the congestion and pressures at this intersection. They generally are not familiar with the pull-out lane that will facilitate left turns onto the highway. Or, they do not respect the limit of one car in the lane at a time.

The two major collisions that occurred within this area in the past 2 weeks should highlight the problems of bringing increased traffic into this intersection. Local residents of Agate Point have encouraged the Bloedel Reserve to use the West Port Madison Road for exit of visitors. In the long-term 20-year plan designed by Johnpaul Jones, he rejected this option because he said that "aesthetically" it was preferable for visitors to enter and exit the Reserve via Dolphin Road. However, in the opinion of many residents of Agate Point, the safety of the local residents should be of higher priority than aesthetics.

Because of these concerns about the current Proposal, we encourage the City of Bainbridge Island Planning and Community Development to:

1) Acquire information about the recent growth and future expansion plans of the Bloedel Reserve in order to evaluate the current and long-term implications of the Proposal.

2) Engage COBI traffic engineers to review the impact of the Proposal on current local vehicular and pedestrian traffic on Dolphin Road, Agatewood Road, and Agate Point Road, and at the intersection of Agatewood Road and Hwy 305, to identify potential hazards and risks. (There is no evidence that the Reserve has engaged traffic engineers to participate in the development of its Proposal.)

3) Work with the Bloedel Reserve to develop alternative plans for traffic in and out of the Reserve to mitigate risks and negative impacts on local residents of the City of Bainbridge Island. Two alternatives have been suggested by neighbors:

a) Visitors to the Reserve exit on West Port Madison Road. This would reduce traffic on Dolphin and Agatewood Roads, and reduce the increasing pressure of Reserve traffic at the intersection between Agatewood and Hwy 305.

b) Entrance to the Reserve be moved further west on Dolphin Road and lead to a new entry gate on the opposite side of the current Gatehouse. Exit from the Reserve would remain at the current gate. This plan would allow the entrance to the Reserve to be extended into a longer lane before the new entry gate which would reduce the current back-up of cars on Dolphin Road. However, this option would not reduce the increasing Reserve traffic on Dolphin and Agatewood Roads or at the intersection of Agatewood and Hwy 305.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns and requests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marcia Williams".

Marcia F. Williams