![Issaquah Alps Trails Club logo — EST. 1979]

The E-Alpiner
March, 2019
Emailed to members March 8, 2019

'It did not seem right': How a group of savvy Issaquah residents halted a housing development

Julie Clark, left, Kay Haynes, David Kappler and Susan Neville were instrumental in getting the Issaquah City Council to buy... (Steve Ringman / The Seattle Times)

It helps that the core group has organizing skills and includes energetic retirees and a stay-at-home mom, who can devote hundreds of hours to the effort.

Erik Lacitis
Seattle Times staff reporter

ISSAQUAH — It was a multimillion-dollar housing development that looked like a done deal, carved out of what's called "the Issaquah Alps."

If over the years you have driven on Interstate 90 past the town, you've seen the rows of homes sprouting where there used to be woods. The proposed development of 57 homes on 46 acres on the lower slopes of Cougar Mountain would be one more addition.
The paperwork from the developer was well on its way through the bureaucratic channels, including a 137-page Critical Areas Evaluation and Geotechnical Engineering Report that deemed the site suitable for the proposed development if "carefully designed and constructed." But the done deal was undone.

The Bergsma Development, named after the family that ran a dairy here and had bought the land, was stopped with an Issaquah City Council vote on Dec. 3. And it all happened because of a core group of three residents with no previous background in political activism. For them, it all started with a simple belief: "It did not seem right," says Kay Haynes.
How they did it could be a template for would-be activists.
Spoiler alert: It helps a lot if all in that core group have organizing skills and include energetic retirees and a stay-at-home mom, who can devote hundreds of hours to the effort.

The Bergsma name has a long history in Issaquah. From 1922 to 1969, the family owned the Issaquah Valley Dairy. A 1960s picture shows Bill Bergsma Sr., dressed as Santa Claus, riding in a horse-drawn wagon down Main Street. By 1986, all that was left of the dairy was an old white barn — "a landmark for people entering the Issaquah Valley," says the caption on a Issaquah History Museums photo. The Bergsma descendants entered into an agreement with Windward Real Estate Services of Kirkland, which on its website says it specializes "in difficult transactions and sites that are difficult to develop and build."
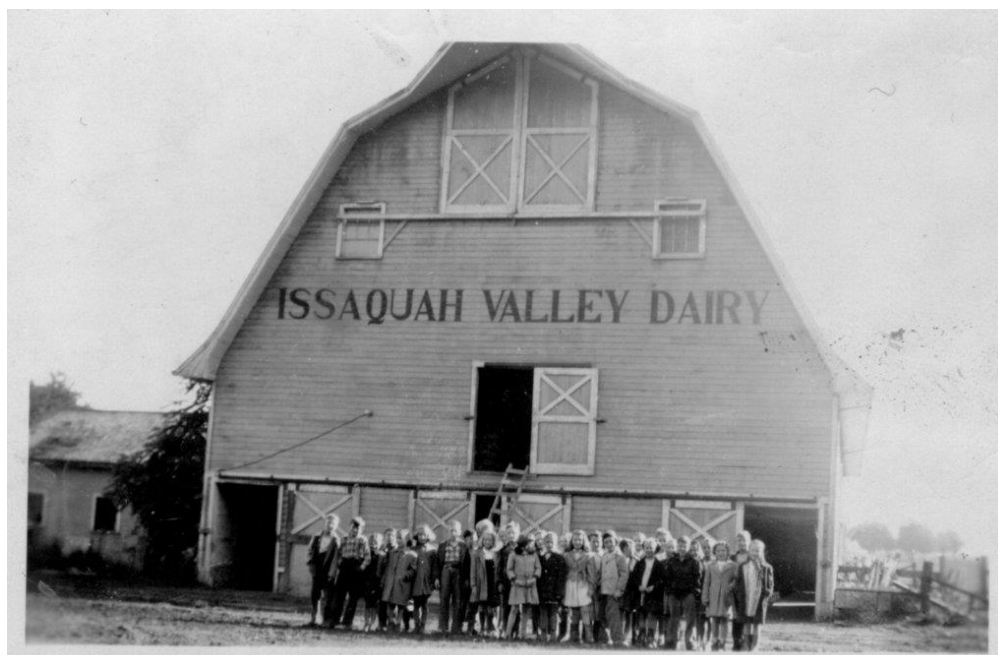
Schoolchildren stand in front of the Bergsma farm, which ran the Issaquah Valley Dairy from 1922 until 1969. (Issaquah History Museums)

With more families moving to Issaquah, "There's a need here and we're just responding to a need," Jim Tosti, head of Windward, told the Issaquah Reporter in late 2017. Haynes, 75, was executive director of the nonprofit Office of Rural and Farmworker Housing. She lives next door to Susan Neville, 63, a retired buyer for Macy's, whose background includes helping launch drugstore.com. Their homes are in a cluster of three dozen on Cougar Mountain's lower slopes, the same area that has 1,000 other homes as part of the Talus Development.

How to stop a development

The proposed Bergsma Development would have put 57 homes on 46 acres — until a group of residents intervened.
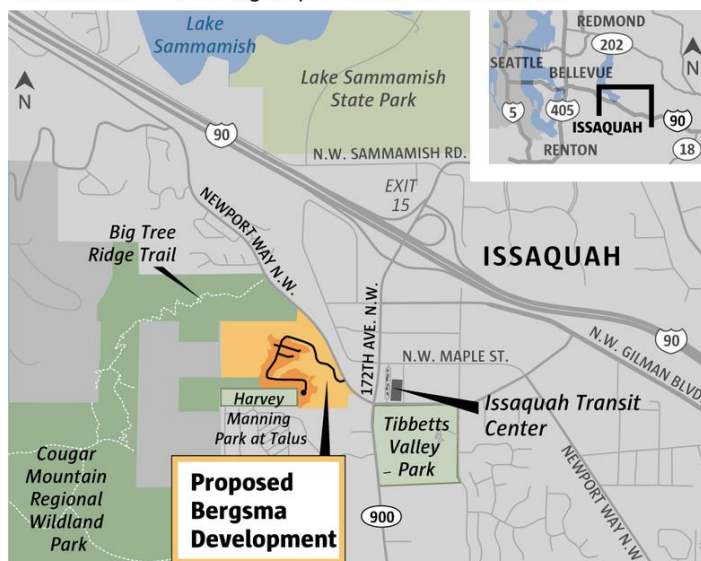
Source: Issaquah city development map   MARK NOWLIN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Initially, they weren't trying to stop the Bergsma Development, just a connector road proposed from Bergsma to Talus and then to the Newport Way Northwest arterial. No, no, Haynes and Neville decided. Neville remembers talking to a couple with two young boys. "They had moved to Issaquah for the green space. This is not the Issaquah people had planned to move to." Haynes and Neville emailed about three dozen neighbors about the changes about to take place and set a meeting at Haynes' home. Nine neighbors showed up on Feb. 9, 2017. Haynes and Neville recruited another area resident, Julie Clark, 55, a stay-at-home mom who had worked as an executive assistant at tech startups. How to start? A petition opposing the connector road should be presented to the city, the group decided. The petition said traffic would go through narrow streets not designed for high volumes. "Safety of families and children MUST come first," it said. Says Clark, "I went door to door, talked to people. It was great meeting people. We collected over 200 signatures." The women kept expanding their email list, eventually reaching 2,000 people. The hours they spent kept adding up. For the core group, over the past 1½ years, that meant attending 36 regular Issaquah City Council meetings; 15 face-to-face meetings with one of the Issaquah council members; four with city planners; five with Issaquah Parks; nine with Metropolitan King County Council members; and four with various other government types. Neville knows this because she kept careful track. In June 2017, the City Council voted unanimously 7-0 to deny the connector road — and the Bergsma Development. "It was standing room only," Clark says of the meeting.

Mary Lou Pauly, mayor of Issaquah, says about why the council voted down the development, "Seeing the challenges with grades, wetlands, slopes, it didn't seem suitable for subdivision ... It was not a mutually beneficial proposal." That, however,

was just another round in the match. Windward had needed the City Council's approval for their development, because at 78 homes it would "cluster" more units on smaller lots than was allowed in city land-use codes. Windward returned with a plan for a smaller development, of 57 homes, and no connector road, that did not require such a development agreement. Now what? The women decided to seize the momentum. They would push to have the city buy the 46 acres as a park. And so the group Save Cougar Mountain was born.

84 feet of signatures

It was about then that they asked David Kappler to join the core group. He's 70, a retired middle-school teacher and former Issaquah City Council member. On the board of the Issaquah Alps Trail Club, Kappler had been part of a successful effort to save 226 acres of forest on Squak Mountain. At The Trust for Public Land, which raises funds to acquire parkland, they knew Kappler. "He was crucial to making this project happen," says Sam Plotkin, the nonprofit's project manager for the Northwest. The trust began working on how to acquire the property. The group called and sent emails to the media, which in their case gave them credibility exactly because theirs wasn't a professional PR effort. Stories ran in The Seattle Times, the Issaquah Reporter and the online publication Crosscut. They thought up a clever publicity stunt. On Oct. 15, during the public-comment session of the City Council meeting, the group dramatically unfurled an 84-foot scroll with 2,500 signatures asking the council to explore acquiring the 46 acres for parkland. They used social media, creating a Facebook page and a website. It worked. An agreement was reached among the city and Windward and the Bergsma heirs to sell the property for $11 million. On Dec. 3, the City Council approved the plan. Lee Bergsma, 78, one of the trustees of the property, says there are 28 cousins who have a share in it. Of the Bergsma land, he says, "It's probably coming to an end. We'll just move on."

With a $3 million loan from the Trust for Public Land, $7.6 million of city money and $355,000 from the county, the deal is set to close at the end of February.The city says it "has a high degree of certainty" that it'll be able to secure county and state grant money, so that in the end, the city will have to pay only about $3.9 million. If the city can't obtain grant money, the agreement allows the city to sell all or a portion of the acreage. Tosti, head of Windward, says his company spent five years on the project. About selling the land, he says: "We have some feelings both pro and con. We have no animus." Pauly says buying the Bergsma land "was always a possibility," but that it wasn't on the city's radar until this core group formed.
She says, "What they did was show there was a broad base of support for purchasing it. It wasn't just a neighborhood, or a couple of neighbors, it wasn't a NIMBY, 'Don't build on my backyard.' Says Tosti about citizen activists, "The system is set up so that anybody with $75 bucks and a heartbeat can file an appeal." And, he says, "Most importantly, they have the ear of the council. These are the last people to talk to council members."

Erik Lacitis: 206-464-2237 or elacitis@seattletimes.com; on Twitter: @ErikLacitis.

Annual Land Conservation Panel Discussion

The third annual Land Conservation Panel Discussion was held Thursday evening in the historic Pickering Barn, and a good time was had by all. The event has been held in the Issaquah Depot the last two years, but the popularity of the event has warranted a larger venue, and the Pickering Barn was perfect (with room to grow).

The keynote speech was delivered by Mary Lou Pauly, Mayor of Issaquah. The panel discussion was moderated by Doug McClelland, former DNR land manager, with the panel comprised of an august collection of local public land managers:

- John Ernster, Cascade Foothills Area Manager, Washington State Parks
- Katy Terry, Assistant Director, King County Parks and Recreation
- Jeff Watling, Parks and Recreation Director, City of Issaquah
- Laurie Benson, South Puget Sound Assistant Region Manager, Washington State Department of Natural Resources
- Angie Feser, Parks and Recreation Director, City of Sammamish

Ken Konigsmark welcomes the attendees.

The IATC has a new Executive Director

We are so pleased to welcome our new Executive Director Lindsay Frickle to the IATC!

Lindsay is a development professional with over fifteen years experience serving the nonprofit sector. She's a native to the area and is thrilled to help lead and grow the IATC.

She most recently held the position of Director of Major Gifts at St. Mary's Academy in Portland, where she led and managed major gifts strategies and relationships. Previously, as Major Gifts and Planned Giving Officer at Pacific Northwest Ballet (PNB) she managed major donor relationships and the ballet's planned giving program. Lindsay also served as Corporate Relations Manager for PNB where she managed corporate sponsor relationships. Prior to that, as Director of Development for Broadway Bound Children's Theatre, Lindsay led and managed all fundraising activities. She's also raised funds for a handful of other arts organizations in Seattle and Portland.

Lindsay holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from University of Arizona, a Certificate in Fundraising Management from University of Washington, a Master of Arts in Educational Theatre from New York University, and is a Certified Fund Raising Executive. She is also the mother of two little hikers, Teddy and Lillian.

IATC at the "Hiker Rally Day" in Olympia

Tuesday, February 19, was "Hiker Rally Day" in Olympia, and your club was represented in the Washington Trails Association contingent by George Potter and Tom Anderson (IATC board members). Thanks to the WTA for such a well organized event and helping us make our voices heard in Olympia.

Group photo of WTA trail and public land advocates on the steps of the capitol building in Olympia.

The District 5 sub-group (covering east King County towns like Issaquah, Maple Valley, Snoqualmie, North Bend, etc.), meeting with state Senator Mark Mullet. The senate was not in session, so we were lucky to take this photo in the senate chambers. Tom Anderson February 21, 2019

Copyright Issaquah Alps Trails Club, PO Box 351, Issaquah, WA 98027, www.issaquahalps.org

Rattlesnake Mountain - What's in a Name?

By Ralph Owen

The Naming of Rattlesnake Prairie - First Version (A Tall Tale)

Sometime in the early 1980s Harvey Manning, founding president of the IATC and hiking guidebook author, and I tired of telling people on hikes that we led that we didn't know why Rattlesnake was named Rattlesnake. So we made up the following story to explain the name:

In the 1850s there were a series of Indian Wars (or as the American Indians called them the White-Man Wars) in what is now the State of Washington. Most of them were fought in Central and Eastern Washington. A group of U.S. Cavalry Soldiers came back over Yakima Pass returning from a battle in Central Washington. Yakima Pass, at the head of the Cedar River and south of Snoqualmie Pass, was the traditional horse route over the Cascades used by both the Indians and the Army. They stopped to camp for the night in a grassy area that now is the location of Rattlesnake Lake. One of the soldiers unrolled his bed roll in preparation to go to bed and a dead rattlesnake dropped out onto the ground. Evidently during the previous night in their cold camp in Central Washington it had crawled inside with the soldier to get warm and the soldier had not noticed it. It had been suffocated and died when the bed roll was tightly rolled up to pack that morning. The soldiers named this location Rattlesnake Prairie and the nearby mountain was later named Rattlesnake Mountain.

The Naming of Rattlesnake Prairie - Second Version

This version is from the book *Pioneer Days on Puget Sound* by Arthur A. Denny which was published in 1888. Denny was the leader of the party that first landed on Alki Beach (West Seattle) in 1851 and has been called the "Founder and Father of Seattle" and was the founder of the University of Washington.

A party of men from Seattle set out on an expedition toward Lake Keechelus (or as Denny spells it Lake Kitcheles) in the early summer of 1855 looking for a route for a road through the

Cascades from Seattle to Central Washington. As Denny writes in his book: "At one time they were camping at what is now known as Rattlesnake prairie, and one of the party was startled by a rattling in the weeds. He reported that he heard a rattlesnake, which on investigation proved to be simply the dry seed pods of a weed; but it was sufficient to give a name to a place which it has ever after kept."

Rattlesnake Prairie Becomes Rattlesnake Lake

There was no lake at Rattlesnake Prairie in the 1850s at the time of the two naming stories above. Rattlesnake Lake appeared in the spring of 1915 when waters inundated Rattlesnake Prairie and a small town located in the prairie.

In order to understand this flooding, it helps to know a bit about the City of Seattle's Cedar River Water Shed. In the late 1880s, after the big Seattle Fire, the Seattle Water Department began to realize that they did not have enough water for the people of the growing city and also not enough to fight large fires. They began to look for an additional water supply and discovered the Cedar River. By 1899, Seattle had acquired most of what is now the City of Seattle's Cedar River Water Shed. They began to use Cedar Lake, later named by Seattle as Chester Morse Lake as their upstream reservoir. Cedar Lake was east of Rattlesnake Prairie and was about 600' higher in elevation with the wall of a glacier side moraine left during the last ice age between the lake and the prairie. Cedar Lake was drained by the Cedar River which had cut a course down through the gravels of this moraine. The Cedar River continued downstream near, but not through, Rattlesnake Prairie.

In 1905, Seattle built a wooden dam, called the Crib Dam, near the downstream end of Cedar Lake. This was done to increase the lake elevation from 1530' to 1548', both to increase the reservoir storage capacity of the lake and to increase the hydro-electric capability of a generating plant that was being built in the town of Cedar Falls by Seattle City Light.

In several years, Seattle realized that they needed both more water storage capability and more electricity for their growing city. Seattle built a second dam a little ways downstream of the Crib Dam, but still in the upper headwaters of the Cedar River. This concrete dam, called the Masonry Dam, was designed to initially raise the lake level to 1560.5' and later to 1600'. The dam was firmly anchored to solid rock below it and on its southern end. The northern end of the dam was bordered by the gravels of the old glacial side moraine.

The Masonry Dam was finished by the spring of 1915 and the water level behind it slowly began to rise. Before this time the small town of Moncton had been built in Rattlesnake Prairie. Begun around 1906, when the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad was built past Seattle Watershed's town of Cedar Falls, by 1915 more than 200 people lived here. As the water level began to rise behind the Masonry Dam, new springs appeared in the side of the moraine above the prairie and out of the ground within it. Soon a lake began to appear within the prairie. By May, the water was rising in Rattlesnake Lake a foot per day. Houses in Moncton began to float

off their foundations and into the center of the lake. Seattle condemned the town of Moncton, paid off the residents and cleared most of the remains of Moncton out of Rattlesnake Lake. Only a few foundations still exist in the bottom of the lake. Most of Rattlesnake Prairie is now gone as it has become Rattlesnake Lake.

While the Cedar River does not flow into Rattlesnake Lake, the level of Cedar Lake (Now Chester Morse Lake), indirectly regulates the level of Rattlesnake Lake. When Chester Morse is completely full the seepage through the gravels of the moraine raises the level of Rattlesnake. By the end of fall, when the level of Chester Morse drops to its lowest level, the seepage stops and Rattlesnake's level drops.

Houses flooded by the rising waters of Rattlesnake Lake, June 28, 1915. Photo courtesy Seattle Municipal Archive (7580)

IATC Accomplishments Map

IATC volunteer Anne Newcomb worked with Matt Stevenson from Core GIS to produce a detailed map showing land conserved by the IATC and it's partners throughout the 40 years of the Club and shows how different the Issaquah Alps would be without the IATC's advocacy.