

## APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT TO BAINBRIDGE ISLAND CITY COUNCIL POSITION #2

### Applicant Information

(Please type or print)

Applicant Name Tyler N. Benson

Residence Address [REDACTED], Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work/Cell Phone [REDACTED]

E-Mail [REDACTED]

### Cover Letter & Resume

Please attach a one-page cover letter and a resume of no more than two pages to this application.

### Supplemental Questions

Please respond to the following questions regarding your interest in the position of Councilmember for the City of Bainbridge Island on separate pages using no more than 3 pages total:

1. Why are you interested in serving as a Bainbridge Island City Councilmember?
2. What strength would you bring to the Council?
3. What are the three highest priorities and/or issues you believe the City needs to address? How would you propose to address these issues?
4. Explain your current and past community involvement and/or service on city, nonprofit, or public boards, committees, task forces, or commissions and how this has contributed to the Bainbridge Island community. Address its relevance to the position of Bainbridge Island City Councilmember.
5. What do you wish to accomplish during this appointed term as a Bainbridge Island City Councilmember?
6. What is your vision for our City and community?
7. Is there anything else that you may wish to add that would help us get to know you a little better?

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Please return this form, your cover letter, resume, and answers to the supplemental questions to the City Clerk at Bainbridge Island City Hall (280 Madison Avenue North, [cityclerk@bainbridgewa.gov](mailto:cityclerk@bainbridgewa.gov)) **no later than 4:00 pm on Wednesday, November 25, 2020**. Applications received after 4:00 pm will not be accepted. The application and any correspondence should be addressed to:

**Christine Brown, City Clerk**  
**Councilmember Recruitment 280**  
**Madison Avenue North**  
**Bainbridge Island, WA 98110**  
[cityclerk@bainbridgewa.gov](mailto:cityclerk@bainbridgewa.gov)

November 22, 2020

Bainbridge Island City Council  
280 Madison Avenue North  
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

Dear Mayor Schneider, Deputy Mayor Deets, and Councilmembers,

I am writing to submit my application for the North Ward vacancy on the Bainbridge Island City Council. We are at a particularly distinctive time in history that requires leaders of resolve, purpose, prudence, and passion. Given my unique background and experiences and my commitment to improving our Island home, I believe that I can offer a meaningful perspective and capacity for the tough work that these times require. It would be a true honor and privilege to serve our community as councilmember for the North Ward.

My professional life has been based around public service, local economic improvement, and municipal finance. In my current role at the University of Washington, our small team oversees the institution's global bond issuance strategy and internal and external debt portfolios. We handle approximately \$100 million in annual bond issuances and manage over \$2 billion in proceeds, which we allocate to a wide array of public development projects across campus. We also conduct detailed budget reviews and assist in unit-level financing strategies for major borrowers like UW Medicine and Intercollegiate Athletics. I look forward to an opportunity to put my institutional budgeting and fiscal management experience to work for our City in the year ahead.

Prior to my University work, I co-founded a business incubator and spent five years expanding the company to locations across five states. Starting with only two of us, we grew to over 300 employees and provided dozens of entrepreneurs – many of whom were underrepresented in local business – the opportunity to start their businesses for low-risk and low-cost. I served as Co-CEO and CFO, leading all fundraising efforts to raise funds from community development lenders and private investors, mentoring new business teams in navigating the start-up process, connecting our business owners with necessary resources, and directing all marketing and advertising activities across our social media platforms and through grassroots initiatives in each market. Although my business partner and I divested in 2019, we maintain that this kind of on-the-ground work is vital to healthy local economic development in cities across the country.

Before co-founding the company, I served as a U.S. Naval Officer aboard two warships. I completed two deployments to the Arabian Gulf region, the first involving a circumnavigation of the globe, and had the opportunity to work with diverse teams of servicemen and women in high-pace exercises. I ultimately led over 100 personnel from a wide array of backgrounds, frequently navigated the ship during high-risk missions through international waterways, and served on the command's Navy-Marine Corps planning committee as its youngest member to provide detailed recommendations on classified exercises to senior officers. Serving in the military – from Naval ROTC in college through my post-active duty Reserve service – represented a decade of intensive leadership and management skills-building that has informed everything I have done since.

In all of these experiences, passion for service and dedication to mission have been at the core of my efforts. Furthermore, as the youngest member of Council, I can offer a unique perspective on important issues that the next generation of Islanders care most about. I would look to continue Councilmember Medina's important work in outreach and civic engagement among young people, and as I detail in responses to the supplemental questions, I would aim to contribute immediately and meaningfully to efforts toward transparency, inclusion, and equity in our government. I look forward to next steps in the process and hope to have the opportunity to serve alongside you all as member of City Council. Please feel free to visit my LinkedIn profile at your convenience: [linkedin.com/in/tylernbenson](https://www.linkedin.com/in/tylernbenson). Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tyler N. Benson

Enclosed:

- (1) Supplemental Question Responses
- (2) Résumé

## 1. Why are you interested in serving as a Bainbridge Island City Councilmember?

Public service has long been at the center of my life and a value I hold most closely. As a former Naval Officer and founder of a locally focused economic development company, I have furthered the public good not through elected office, but through direct action and on-the-ground service. Recent national and international geopolitical events, however, have prompted me to ask how I can be involved in the policymaking process at the most local level – the level where real change occurs in politics and the lives of the citizens made better most directly. Like many areas of the country and the world, Bainbridge Island is undergoing change. From questions around prudent development strategy, to protection of our cherished natural resources, to new challenges created by the global pandemic, our Island needs leaders who will answer the call and bring us together to come to equitable, just, and pragmatic solutions to these most pressing challenges. There is a call for those who can contribute to stand up and do so, and I believe that my background brings a unique perspective and voice to our City's governance.

At the core, I seek to serve on the Council because the Island is my home and I therefore have a duty to contribute to its improvement, protection, and sustainability. My young son does not yet know how fortunate he is to live in such a place, but I dream for him to grow up here, to travel the world as I did, and to always have a solid sense of place in his heart. Bainbridge Island is a solid place. It is not simply somewhere we all live; it is a generational home we are actively creating, through daily deeds and small acts, for our families and their future families. The long view must be the foundational ethos of our policymaking, if now more than ever before. At this crossroads of our society, it is vital that we assess with discernment the paths ahead and ensure that our policy decisions – our actions – align with our dreams for this home we are building.

## 2. What strength would you bring to the Council?

**To the Council, I bring as core strengths (1) leadership and managerial background working with diverse teams, (2) small business ownership and institutional finance and budgeting experience, and (3) a new voice for young families and capacity to grow civic engagement among young people on the Island.**

Serving in the Navy, I led over 100 Sailors across two warships and two deployments to the Arabian Gulf. I had the honor of leading a diverse team of servicemen and women on tours that took us to nearly every ocean on Earth, where we completed joint exercises with foreign navies. My ultimate task was to provide for the ongoing training, resources, advancement, and well-being of my division – many of whom were just out of high school. To do this well, one needed to learn quickly how to manage scarce resources, advocate for one's team before higher command, and be a listener and a servant to those from a multitude of backgrounds. Overall, as an officer onboard ship, my leadership and managerial role was direct and continuous; on deployment and in port, the responsibility never rested. That is the kind of leadership I plan to bring to City Council.

After the military and graduating from business school, I co-founded a business incubator alongside another Veteran. Our goal was simple but novel: Provide the financial, material, and informational resources for aspiring entrepreneurs to start their small businesses for low-risk and low-cost. Wherever possible, we sought to advance underrepresented business owners yearning for a fair shot. Starting with zero capital, we directly raised over \$11 million in growth financing, built the business to over 300 total staff and locations in five states, and helped dozens of business owners find their start. We spent time one-on-one with them, helping craft growth and financing strategies, navigating them through the challenges that we had already traversed when starting our own company, and connecting them with local resources. My business partner and I shared the belief that the kind of localized, direct-action work that we took up over the years building the business truly helped those who would not have otherwise had the chance for business ownership.

Now, working on the bond team at the University of Washington, I have had the opportunity to contribute toward a unique effort in public finance. Our team of only four manages over \$2 billion in internal and external debt of the University. We work every day with state government, rating agencies, and consultants to structure bond offerings, coordinate with major lenders and consultants, deliver internal lending solutions to large campus entities like UW Medicine, review institutional budgets and forecasts, and set financing policy that is viewed nationwide as a leading example to follow.

If appointed, I will be the youngest member of Council. As the father of a young family, I will bring a voice to represent the residents looking to raise their children and build their lives here, and I will look to continue Councilmember Medina's work in increasing civic engagement among young people on the Island. If we want a more equitable, innovative, and sustainable future, we must not only prepare the next generation for leadership but include them early and often in the policy making process. So many of them have good ideas and big hearts. We need to listen and remember that all policies should reflect what we envision for the Island in ten, twenty, thirty years; not for us, but for our children, and theirs.

**3. What are the three highest priorities and/or issues you believe the City needs to address? How would you propose to address these issues?**

First, our pressing concern is the local management of and eventual recovery from the global pandemic. The health and safety of our citizens is our highest priority, and I believe the Council has handled the response well – I commend the recent approval of an Island testing site in Winslow. Yet, small businesses across the Island are stressed under the weight of reduced volume and need more direct assistance, through both policy and strategy means. It is true that our City revenues depend much more on property than business taxes, but these small businesses owners are integral to the character of our Island, and moreover they are real people whom others depend on for a living wage. *I know what it is like to struggle with momentum in business and be forced to bootstrap to make ends meet. I know what it is like to have hundreds of employees depend on my decision-making for their livelihoods. I know the weight and the burden this responsibility carries, and I wish a local government leader had been there during those times to listen to my concerns.*

Now, with such burdens only deepened in an overturned economy and the likelihood of a reversal of the reopening plan due to a new wave of the pandemic, direct action is necessary to support our small businesses, but it is not sufficient. We also need to meet with and listen to the real voices of those who create jobs, provide us important goods and services, and contribute to the unique charisma of our Island. For those of us who bring experience, we need to provide strategic assistance wherever we can. Small business may have a voice within the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Association, but they also need an advocate on the Council. Furthermore, during these challenging times for municipal finance nationwide, we need budgetary and finance aptitude represented in local leadership. **My combined work in public finance and small business strategy and development is directly suited for addressing these challenges. I will take up a close review of the City budget on day one, seek to forge deeper coordination with organizations like the Kitsap Economic Development Alliance and Washington's SBDC, and engage an economic best practices discussion with leaders of other communities across the state and nation.**

Second, a few recent noteworthy events, such as the Council's recent proposed changes to the Ethics Program, have highlighted the importance of transparency in our local government. To arrive at better answers to concerns about good governance, we need to start asking better questions. How are we communicating our aims to citizens? In those communications, are we conveying the cost-benefit balance of our decision making in an understandable way? When we vote on an issue, approve a measure, or allocate funds on slim or split consent from the governed, are we making adequate efforts to explain those decisions? **I believe that equitable solutions to the challenges we face begin with transparent and frequent communication. We can and should extend more efforts towards social media, restart and improve the COBI Connects publication, and spend less time in Council meetings and more time engaging with our neighbors in the community.** Institutionalizing these changes will provide us better ways of learning about our citizens' wants and needs, allow for better policy responses, and greatly improve the transparency of local government. As a Councilmember, I would be readily available across my own social media platforms, hold office hours at least twice per week, and host ad hoc public discussion forums on key issues. This is the kind of leadership I know from military service and what would I plan to implement as a public official.

Third, the prudent management of development activity and the uncompromising preservation of our natural resources are critical issues. This is more than protecting the character of the Island; this is about our philosophy and values as a community, as a people. When so much of the natural world is at the mercy of inept governments and corporate profiteers, we must look to a bottom-up approach to sustainability. What can be done at the local level to save our environment, must be done. **On the Council I will work to continue expanding protections on uninhabited land, concentrate new development in Winslow and Lynwood, strategically expand non-vehicle access routes such as the Sound-to-Olympics trail, and ask the toughest questions about every new proposed building project.** I look forward to contributing to upcoming decisions related to our Sustainable Transportation and Climate Action Plans (both of which I strongly support), particularly as they relate to new budgetary constraints. These are vital projects; what we do today will echo through the generations we hope to raise here.

**4. Explain your current and past community involvement and/or service on city, nonprofit, or public boards, committees, task forces, or commissions and how this has contributed to the Bainbridge Island community. Address its relevance to the position of Bainbridge Island City Councilmember.**

My public service has been concentrated in my military service and subsequently, time spent building a social mission company focused on economic growth and job creation. During my time in the Navy, I completed two tours of duty to the Middle East, the first in support of Operation Enduring Freedom that involved a successful circumnavigation of the globe and joint exercises with foreign navies. I had the opportunity to lead diverse teams in complex exercises and served on the commanding officer's Navy-Marine Corps planning cell as its youngest member, where I was relied upon to provide detailed recommendations for classified exercises. Overall, my military service was foundational in that it proved to me the necessity and wide applicability of the lessons of servant leadership. Those tenets – team over individual, listening over speaking, long-term outcomes over short-term gains – are what the best governance requires.

As outlined above, my work building localized urban business accelerators for start-ups in the food and beverage industry was aimed directly at creating opportunity for those with big dreams but high barriers to small business ownership. As Co-CEO, I wore every hat; I created and pitched our business model, set growth and location selection strategy, directly raised all of our company's growth capital in coordination with community-based lenders, wrote our employee and operating handbooks, provided one-on-one assistance to our small businesses, and directed the day-to-day management of the company. The opportunity to lead this kind of bottom-up work demonstrated the criticality of local efforts for economic growth. It could not have been done without the kind of roll-up-your-sleeves ethic that our City needs now and that I can offer through service on the Council.

**5. What do you wish to accomplish during this appointed term as a Bainbridge Island City Councilmember?**

One year is not enough to achieve all of my goals for our community – but there is much progress we can make. My work toward pandemic mitigation and recovery efforts will begin immediately with one-on-ones with small business leaders and the Chamber of Commerce. Many important changes in Council communication and transparency, too, can be jumpstarted right away with open community forums and the launch of new platforms as I note above. As a new generation deepens their political involvement here, it is more critical than ever to keep up with the pace of technological change in the way we connect with constituents. An hour or two of optional office hours per week is not enough; we need to show a relentlessness in our commitment to the public voice. This is what is demanded of community leaders and what we are compelled to deliver.

Additionally, I look forward to joining the decision-making process for the new City Manager as I know we can make continued efforts to increase diversity in the ranks of our city staff. I also would like to step into the gap created by Councilmember Medina's departure in local and regional board liaison positions, in particular KEDA, IGWG, and the Kitsap Transit Board. In the longer-term, coming to balanced solutions to affordable housing, sustainable transportation, and smart development that fit within our Comprehensive Plan, Climate Action Plans, and racial equity goals should be the basic framework for our policy actions on the Island.

**6. What is your vision for our City and community?**

Bainbridge Island is an exceptional place. It has the potential to become a model for all small communities, but only if we continue to prioritize thoughtful leadership and the long view of change. Our City can and should be a beacon for those with dreams of a well-rounded life. We can be an interconnected, sustainable, open and transparent community that cares for each other and our environment. We can lift each other up, break down the barriers that divide us, deliver on inclusion and equality, and ensure anyone who comes to live here is proud that they did. We can prove that protecting the earth and living vibrantly are not mutually exclusive; that development, when done thoughtfully and incrementally, can coexist with raw nature without detracting from it. We can be more than preservers and protectors of the character of our city – we can define the next level of change before it defines us. And we can relish the short-term – every sunrise in this beautiful place is a true gift – while planning fastidiously for the long-term. We can do these things because we are a people of principle, of prudence, of reflection, and of determination. There is nothing we cannot do. My vision of this community is one of acceptance, support, prosperity, and kindness in the broadest respects.

**7. Is there anything else that you may wish to add that would help us get to know you a little better?**

My wife, son, and I reside in Rolling Bay. Aside from weekend hiking, you will find us at Cups or Eagle Harbor Books (usually in that order) debating current issues. I am also a runner and cyclist who believes that Bainbridge is one of the most underappreciated triathlon training areas in the country.

My family has benefitted from the superb quality of life, natural abundance, and supportive community here. It would be a true honor and privilege to serve this City alongside you in the Council. Our Island is a place full of highly qualified and passionate people, and while I expect there will be many such applicants for this post, I believe that I can bring a unique perspective, voice, and ethic to our government. There is much important work to be done and little time to lose.

For additional background, please visit my LinkedIn profile: [www.linkedin.com/in/tylernbenson/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/tylernbenson/)

# Tyler N. Benson

Bainbridge Island, WA • [REDACTED] • [REDACTED]

**Public Finance Professional, Former United States Naval Officer, Entrepreneur, and MBA.** Prior co-founder of a leading regional company focused on small business advisory and local economic growth. Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal recipient following a circumnavigation and two deployments to the Fifth Fleet Area of Operations.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### University of Washington

May 2020 – Present

#### *UW Central Finance*

Serve to manage the University's \$2 billion public bond portfolio and annual issuances in coordination with rating agencies, state and local government, consultants, campus leadership, and Board of Regents.

- Coordinate the annual issuance of ~\$100 million in public tax-exempt and taxable bonds to fund capital projects across three University campuses.
- Directly manage and set strategy for alternative financing instruments including the University's \$250 million commercial paper and \$200 million line of credit facilities.
- Develop advanced financing methodologies, restructuring plans, and capital allocations for internal campus borrowers such as UW Medicine and Intercollegiate Athletics.
- Prepare and distribute public institutional debt reports such as the Annual Bondholder's Report, annual investor disclosures, and Board of Regents briefing materials.

### Galley Group, Inc.

April 2015 – November 2019

#### *Co-Founder*

Co-founder and Co-CEO of a multi-unit business incubator company focused on partnering with local entrepreneurs in urban centers. Headed organizational efforts and growth of the company to over 300 team members. Led the development of accelerator programs aimed at spurring economic growth and creating new jobs.

- Named to the 2019 Forbes 30 Under 30 list.
- Led and set vision for the company, strategized future growth plans, set organizational culture, built and approved company policies, and managed team relationships.
- Expanded company to locations in five states, formed key community partnerships with local political and business leaders, and coordinated extensively with municipal and state agencies, lenders, real estate teams, and industry consultants.
- Mentored and provided strategic guidance to business teams, organized business planning seminars and lectures, and provided targeted fundraising and expansion assistance.
- Raised growth capital from community lenders, traditional banks, and private investors; served as Board Member and oversaw preparation for all quarterly board meetings.

### United States Navy

May 2011 – April 2015

#### *Assistant Department Head, USS Harpers Ferry (LSD 49) 10/13-04/15*

Led and trained 72 service members in the completion of numerous hazardous, high-paced exercises in the Arabian Gulf, Arabian Sea, and Sea of Japan.

- Formulated the ship's long-range operational schedule; nominated to the commanding officer's Navy-Marine Corps Planning Cell to develop plans for classified exercises.
- Navigated during multiple high-risk transits during a deployment with the USS Boxer Amphibious Readiness Group to the Arabian Sea and Arabian Gulf.

*Division Officer, USS Cape St. George (CG 71) 05/11-10/13*

Supervised and developed a division of 29 service members during the ship's circumnavigation and managed the successful completion of ship repair and system upgrades totaling over \$70 million.

- Executed a nine-month deployment and around-the-world transit with the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (2012), completing transits of the Straits of Malacca, Strait of Hormuz, Suez Canal, and Panama Canal.
- Conducted successful joint exercises with the Marine Nationale, Marina Militare, Royal Australian Navy, and the Royal Thai Navy.

## **EDUCATION**

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**Kelley School of Business, Indiana University**

May 2015

*Master of Business Administration, Finance*

**University of Michigan**

April 2011

*Bachelor of Arts, Psychology*

- Four-Year Scholarship Recipient, Naval ROTC
- Member, Michigan Community Scholars Program