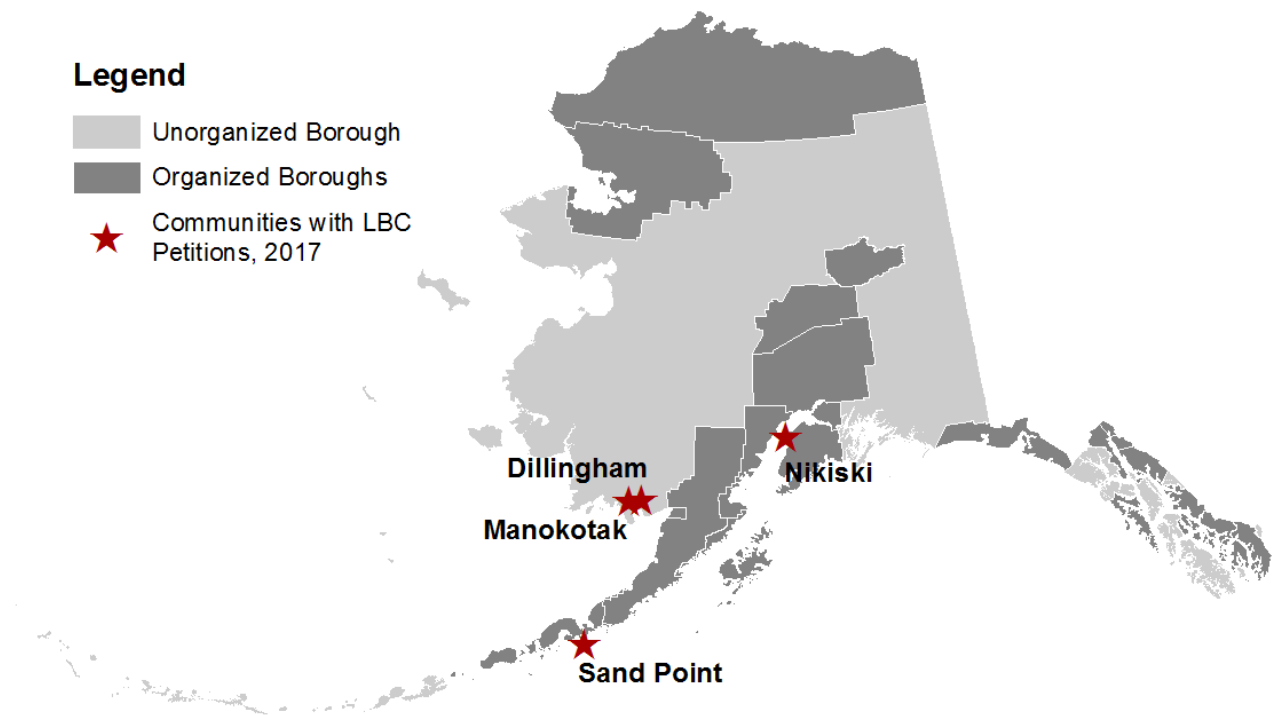


LOCAL BOUNDARY COMMISSION  
2017 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE SECOND  
SESSION OF THE THIRTIETH ALASKA STATE  
LEGISLATURE



Lamar Cotten, Chair

John Harrington, First Judicial District | Bob Harcharek, Second Judicial District

Debra Mack, Third Judicial District | Lavell Wilson, Fourth Judicial District

Local Boundary Commission | Division of Community and Regional Affairs  
Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development  
550 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 1640 | Anchorage, AK | 99501 | [lbc@alaska.gov](mailto:lbc@alaska.gov)  
907-269-4587/4559 | Fax: 907-269-4563

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**Graphic Illustration Only** – The maps in this publication are intended to be used only as general reference guides. Source documents remain the official record.



## LOCAL BOUNDARY COMMISSION

550 WEST 7<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE, SUITE 1640  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501, 907-269-4559/4587, FAX: 907-269-4563

January 2018

Members of the Alaska State Legislature,

On behalf of all members of the Local Boundary Commission, I am pleased to present this report of the commission to the Second Session of the Thirtieth Alaska State Legislature. This report reviews the powers and duties of the LBC, and our activities during 2017. Since our last report in March 2017, the LBC met six times, and one boundary change took effect: the annexation of approximately 72 square miles of land and water to the City of Manokotak.

This report presents information about the petitions that were active during 2017. It also contains details about many communities that expressed interest in pursuing boundary changes as well. The report provides information about the research, analysis, and administrative work LBC staff performed for active petitions. The commission also wishes to recognize the role the two-person staff played in providing information to the many Alaskans who contacted the staff with questions or interest in pursuing boundary changes in their own communities.

The commission respectfully requests that the Legislature consider the activities and issues addressed in this report.

Cordially,

The Local Boundary Commission

Handwritten signature of John Harrington in black ink.

John Harrington  
Commissioner

Handwritten signature of Lamar Cotten in black ink.

Lamar Cotten  
Chair

Handwritten signature of Robert Harcharek in black ink.

Robert Harcharek  
Commissioner

Handwritten signature of Debra Mack in black ink.

Debra Mack  
Commissioner

Handwritten signature of Lavell Wilson in black ink.

Lavell Wilson  
Commissioner

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## CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

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### LOCAL BOUNDARY COMMISSION'S CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATION

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The Local Boundary Commission (LBC or commission) is one of only five state boards or commissions established in the Constitution of the State of Alaska. Article X, section 12 of Alaska's constitution created the LBC. It states that

A local boundary commission or board shall be established by law in the executive branch of the state government. The commission or board may consider any proposed local government boundary change. It may present proposed changes to the Legislature during the first ten days of any regular session. The change shall become effective forty-five days after presentation or at the end of the session, whichever is earlier, unless disapproved by a resolution concurred in by a majority of the members of each house. The commission or board, subject to law, may establish procedures whereby boundaries may be adjusted by local action.

The commission is responsible for establishing and modifying proposed municipal government boundaries. The framers of the state constitution asserted their belief that the state should set municipal boundaries because "local political decisions do not usually create proper boundaries."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, placing decision-making authority with a state body allows debate about boundary changes to be analyzed objectively and to take areawide or statewide needs into consideration.<sup>2</sup>

### LBC DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS

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The LBC acts on petitions for several different municipal (city and borough) boundary changes, including:

- Incorporating municipalities;
- Annexing to municipalities
- Detaching from municipalities;
- Merging municipalities;
- Consolidating municipalities;
- Dissolving municipalities; and
- Reclassifying cities.

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<sup>1</sup> *Fairview Public Utility District No. 1 v. City of Anchorage*, 368 P.2d 540, 543 (Alaska 1962) (citing Alaska Constitutional Convention Minutes of Committee on Local Government, November 28 and December 4, 1955).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

## LBC MEMBERSHIP

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The LBC is an independent commission with five members. The governor appoints LBC members for five-year overlapping terms. One member is appointed from each of Alaska's four judicial districts. The chair is appointed from the state at large.<sup>3</sup>

State law provides that members of the LBC must be appointed "on the basis of interest in public affairs, good judgment, knowledge and ability in the field of action of the department for which appointed, and with a view to providing diversity of interest and points of view in the membership."<sup>4</sup> LBC members receive no pay for their service. However, they are entitled to travel expenses reimbursement and per diem authorized for members of boards and commissions.<sup>5</sup> A biographical summary of the current members of the LBC can be found on the LBC website.

### Members:



**Lamar Cotten, Chair, At Large, Anchorage**

Terms Ends: January 31, 2023



**John Harrington, First Judicial District, Ketchikan**

Term Ends: January 31, 2021



**Robert "Bob" Harcharek, Vice Chair, Second Judicial District, Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow)**

Term Ends: January 31, 2019



**Debra Mack, Third Judicial District, Anchorage**

Term Ends: January 31, 2022



**Lavell Wilson, Fourth Judicial District, Tok**

Term Ends: January 31, 2020

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<sup>3</sup> AS 44.33.810

<sup>4</sup> AS 39.05.060(b)

<sup>5</sup> AS 39.20.180

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## CONSTITUTIONAL ORIGIN OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCY

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Alaska's constitution called for establishing an executive branch agency to advise and assist local governments.<sup>6</sup> That agency is the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (Commerce or department).<sup>7</sup> Within Commerce, the Division of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA) performs the local government agency's functions, including providing staff, research, and assistance to the LBC.<sup>8</sup>

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## LBC STAFF ROLE

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LBC staff is required by law to investigate and analyze each boundary change proposal and to make recommendations regarding it to the commission.<sup>9</sup> For each petition, staff will write at least one report for the commission with its findings. Staff recommendations to the commission are based on properly interpreting the applicable legal standards and rationally applying those standards to each petition. Due process is best served by providing the commission with a thorough, credible, and objective analysis of every local boundary change proposal. Staff's recommendations to the commission are not binding on the LBC.

Besides providing support to the commission, the LBC staff also delivers technical assistance to municipalities, petitioners, residents of areas affected by existing or potential petitions, respondents, agencies, and the general public. The LBC staff provides assistance, including:

- Answering public, legislative, and other governmental inquiries relating to municipal government issues;
- Writing reports on petitions for the LBC;
- Drafting LBC decisions;
- Traveling to communities to conduct public meetings and answer questions about proposed local boundary changes;
- Developing and updating municipal incorporation or boundary change petition forms;
- Sending local boundary change petition forms and materials to interested persons and municipalities;
- Providing a link between the LBC and the public;
- Maintaining and preserving Alaska municipal incorporation and other boundary change records in accordance with Alaska's public records laws;
- Coordinating, scheduling, and attending LBC public meetings and hearings; and
- Developing orientation materials and providing training for new LBC members.

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<sup>6</sup> Article X, section 14

<sup>7</sup> AS 44.33.020(a)(1) provides that Commerce "shall (1) advise and assist local governments."

<sup>8</sup> AS 44.33.020(a)(4)

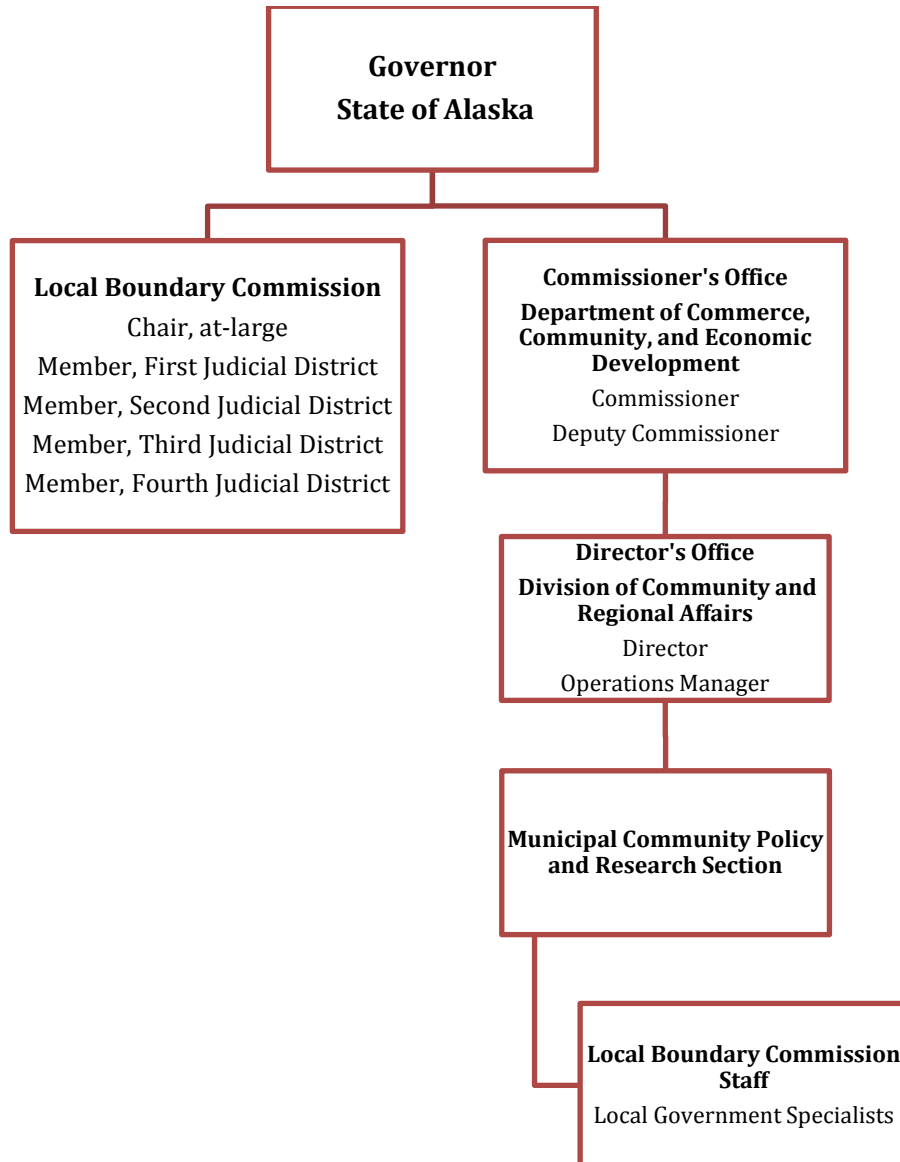
<sup>9</sup> AS 29.04.040, AS 29.05.080, AS 29.06.110, and AS 29.06.480 - 29.06.490; 3 AAC 110.530.

Two staff members located in Anchorage serve the Local Boundary Commission.

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**ORGANIZATIONAL CHART FOR LBC STAFF**

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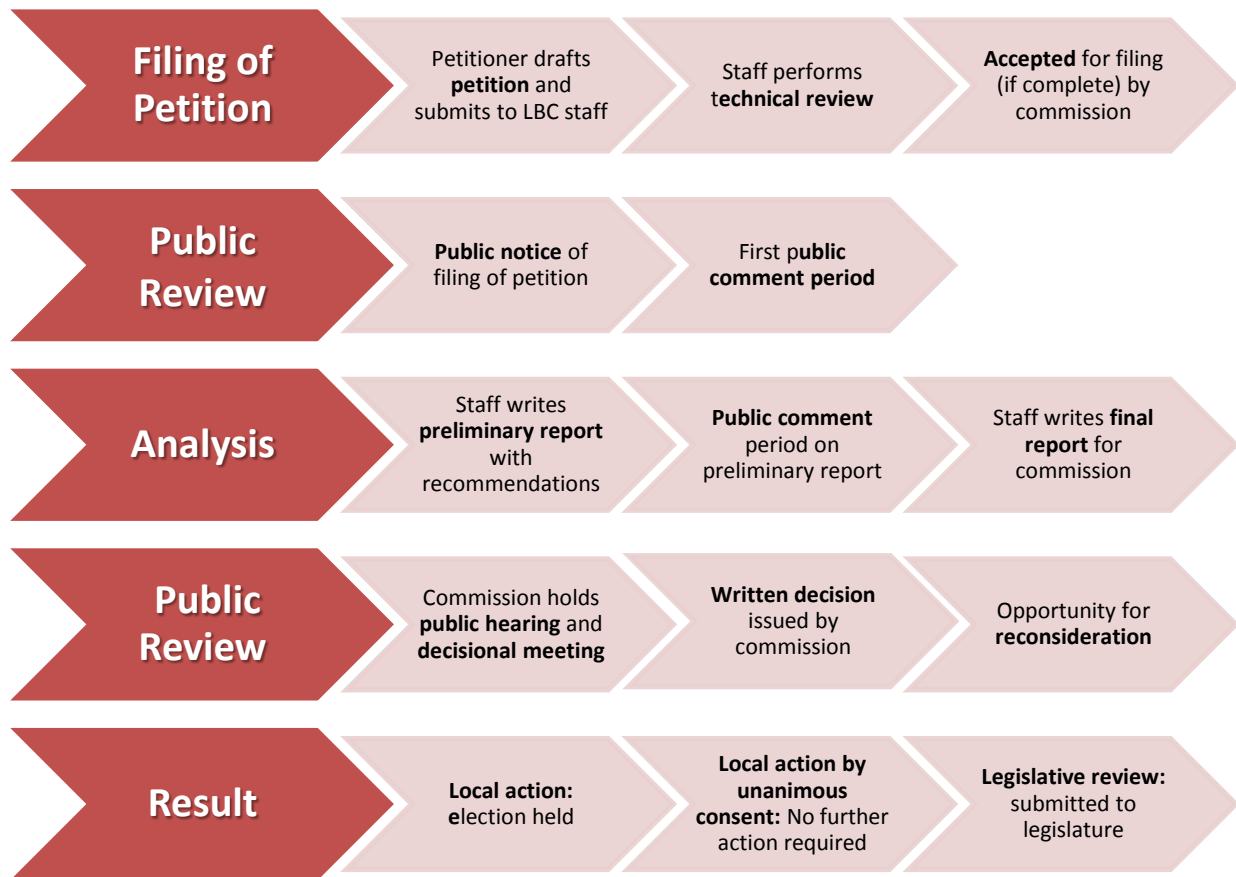
**LOCAL BOUNDARY COMMISSION PETITION PROCESS**

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When the department receives a petition, staff performs a technical review to ensure a petition has all required elements. The review is not an analysis of the merits of the petition. If the petition does not include all of the necessary information, staff sends it back to the petitioner to complete. When a petition passes technical review, it is accepted for filing. At this stage, staff works with the petitioner to ensure the public is notified and the petition is available for review as required by regulations. There are typically two public



comment periods and two publicly available staff reports before the matter comes before the LBC in a public hearing. The reports contain a recommendation for the commissioners. At the public hearing, the LBC listens to the petitioners, any responding parties, and any public comments. At the decisional meeting, the commission discusses the record and reaches a decision. The commission may amend, approve, or deny a petition. If the LBC approves the petition, the next step depends on the type of petition. If a petition is a legislative review petition, the LBC recommendation is submitted to the legislature. The boundary change takes effect after 45 days, unless the legislature adopts a concurrent resolution to deny the recommendation. If the petition is a local action petition, the boundary change question is placed on the ballot for voter approval.

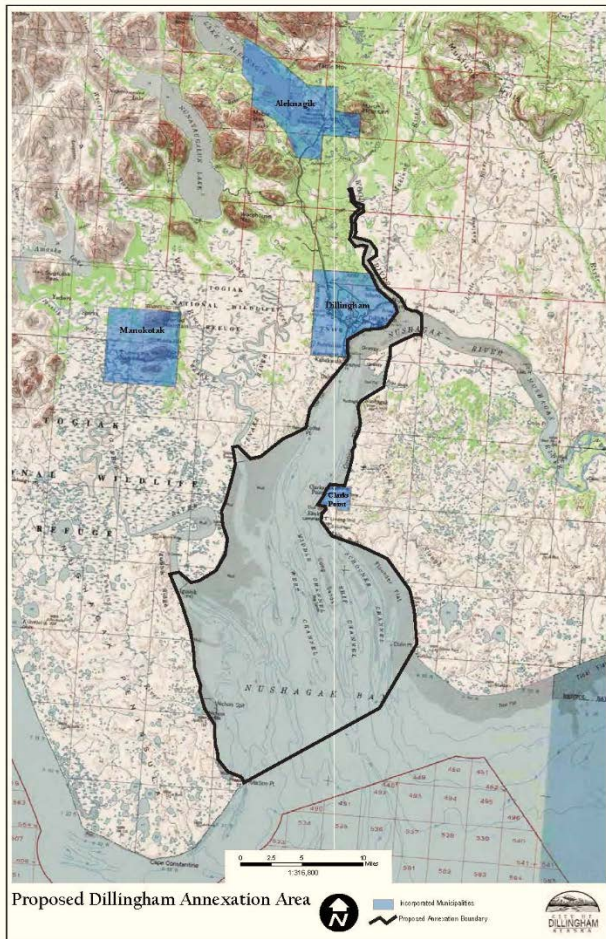


## CHAPTER 2: LOCAL BOUNDARY CHANGES AND ACTIVITIES

### COMPLETED PETITIONS

All maps and documents described in this report can be found on the LBC website: <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/dcra/LocalBoundaryCommission/PastPetitions.aspx>.

#### CITY OF DILLINGHAM ANNEXATION



PETITION STATUS: REJECTED, UNDER APPEAL

The City of Dillingham, a first class city of 2,395 residents, submitted a legislative review annexation petition in early 2015 seeking to annex approximately 399 square miles of land and water in Nushagak Bay in southwest Alaska. LBC staff accepted it for filing in June 2015. In September, staff received a petition from the City of Manokotak with an annexation proposal with boundaries that overlapped those of the Dillingham petition. For details on the City of Manokotak’s proceedings, see the entry below. On December 3, 2015, the LBC chair consolidated Manokotak’s and Dillingham’s petitions in order for both petitions to proceed on the same schedule and be considered side by side.

Staff released a preliminary report to the commission in June 2016, which recommended denial of both petitions. After a second, extended public comment period, a final report was published on October 28, 2016, which also recommended denial of both petitions. Three commissioners and one

staff member traveled to both Dillingham and Manokotak to convene a public hearing in each location between November 28 and 30, 2016. The two other commissioners and an additional staff member participated by phone. The LBC held a decisional meeting in Anchorage on December 1, 2016. The LBC approved Dillingham’s petition<sup>10</sup> with amended boundaries after approving Manokotak’s competing petition in full.

<sup>10</sup> The amended petition was approved by all five commissioners.

On January 4, 2017, respondent Native Village of Ekuk, et al., filed requests to reconsider both the Dillingham and Manokotak decisions; the LBC granted both requests. On January 24, 2017, the LBC reconsidered its December 1, 2016, decision on Dillingham and voted three to one to reject Dillingham's annexation proposal entirely. The written statement of decision rejecting Dillingham's petition on reconsideration was mailed on January 30, 2017. Because the LBC rejected the petition, it did not send its decision to the legislature.

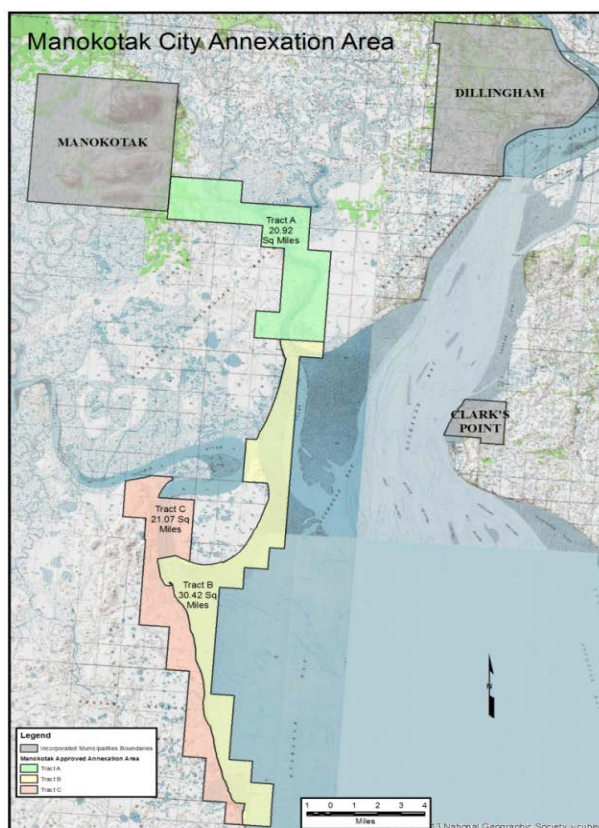
On February 21, 2017, the City of Dillingham filed an appeal in superior court, challenging the LBC's decision to reject its annexation petition on reconsideration. Appellee's briefs were filed in October 2017 and appellant's reply briefs were filed in November 2017. Oral arguments were heard on January 30, 2018.

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### CITY OF MANOKOTAK ANNEXATION

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The City of Manokotak, a second class city on the west side of Nushagak Bay with approximately 500 residents, submitted an annexation petition to the LBC in September 2015. The petition sought to annex approximately 155 square miles of land and water. Because the territory in question partially overlapped the area sought by Dillingham's annexation petition, the City of Manokotak requested consolidation of its proceedings with Dillingham's. The LBC granted the request. As described above, the staff preliminary report and final report recommended denial of both annexation petitions. A public hearing for the petitions was held in Manokotak and Dillingham over three days in November 2016. Following a December 1, 2016, decisional meeting, the commission voted three to two to approve the Manokotak petition as presented.



PETITION STATUS: FINAL, UNDER APPEAL

Staff received a request for reconsideration on January 4, 2017; the commission granted that request for reconsideration on January 10, 2017. The LBC met to reconsider its decision on January 24, 2017 and approved<sup>11</sup> the Manokotak petition with amended boundaries shown on the map above. Approved in writing on January 25, 2017, the decision on reconsideration reduced the boundaries from the original proposal of 155

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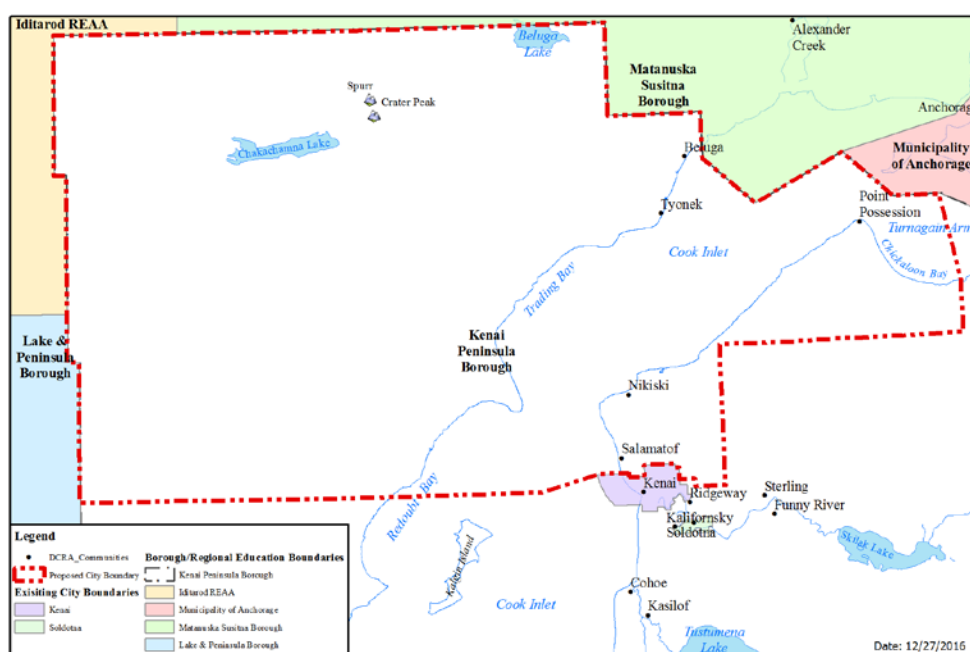
<sup>11</sup> The vote was three to one.

square miles of land and water to approximately 72 square miles of land and water. Because it was a legislative review petition, the written statement of decision was submitted to the legislature within the first ten days of the regular session as required by the Alaska constitution. Manokotak's annexation became effective March 13, 2017. A certificate signed by the commissioner of the department was issued June 13, 2017, indicating that the city's new boundaries encompass 108.4± square miles.

The City of Manokotak filed an appeal in superior court on February 21, 2017, challenging the LBC's decision approving its annexation petition with amendments on reconsideration. Appellee's briefs were filed in October 2017 and appellant's reply briefs were filed in November 2017. Oral arguments were heard on January 30, 2018. The annexation stands unless overturned by the courts.

## INCOMPLETE OR INACTIVE PETITIONS

### NIKISKI INCORPORATION



PETITION STATUS: POSTPONED

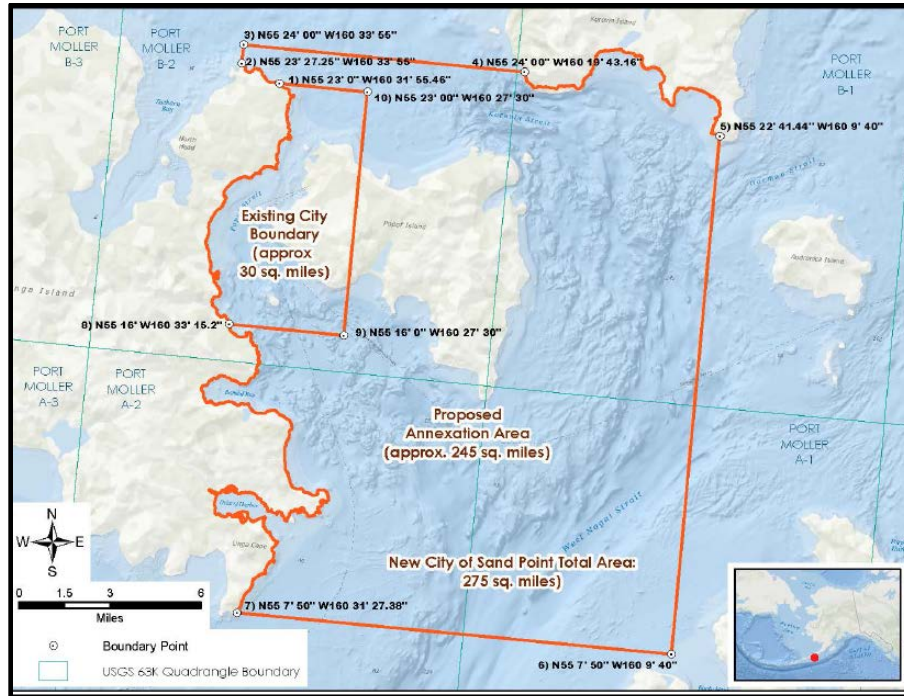
In October 2016, residents of the community of Nikiski in the Kenai Peninsula Borough submitted a local action petition to incorporate Nikiski as a home rule city. On December 30, 2016, LBC staff accepted the Nikiski incorporation for filing. The petition's public comment period began in January 2017 and ended in early March. The proposed city would be 5,480 square miles and include Nikiski, a portion of Cook Inlet, Tyonek, and Beluga. It would border Lake and Peninsula Borough and the unorganized borough to the west, Matanuska-Susitna Borough to the north, and the Municipality of Anchorage to the northeast.

As required by regulations, staff traveled to Nikiski to host an information session on the petition process on February 21, 2017. The preliminary report containing staff recommendations to the LBC was released on May 10, 2017. The report recommended that the LBC deny the Nikiski incorporation petition because the petition did not meet the standards for incorporation. The report described reasons including that the petition did not adequately demonstrate a need for city government and that it proposed to include large unpopulated areas as well as distinct communities within the boundaries.

The preliminary report, based on a review of public comments and briefs as well as an analysis of the petition based on regulations and statutes, triggered a second public comment period, which was extended several times at the request of the petitioner until September 22, 2017. Upon request from the petitioner's representatives, the LBC chair approved a postponement of one year of all petition proceedings. The petitioner's representatives asked for the postponement until October 2018 in order to prepare a possible amended petition. 3 AAC 110.540 requires petitioners to collect new signatures if amended petitions are deemed to have significant changes.

LBC staff awaits petitioners' submission of an amended petition, which will trigger a renewed petition process. If, after the process, the LBC approves the petition, the question of incorporation would then be put to a vote by qualified voters within the proposed home rule city boundaries. Incorporation elections inside and outside organized boroughs are administered by the Alaska Division of Elections.

CITY OF SAND POINT ANNEXATION



PETITION STATUS: WITHDRAWN

The City of Sand Point submitted a legislative review annexation petition on April 15, 2016. After a technical review, staff accepted the petition for filing on October 4, 2016. Sand Point, a first class city in the Aleutians East Borough, had 943 residents as of 2016. It petitioned the LBC to annex approximately 245 square miles of land and water to the current city of approximately 30 square miles of land and water. Following the public notice of filing a petition, the first public comment period concluded December 7, 2016, and the preliminary report containing a staff recommendation was released March 21, 2017. The preliminary report recommended denial of the annexation because it did not meet most of the annexation standards.

The publication of the preliminary report opened a second public comment period. In April 2017, the Sand Point City Council submitted a resolution that withdrew its annexation petition from consideration, which ended the petition process.

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## **BOUNDARY CHANGES EFFECTED IN 2017**

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### **MANOKOTAK**

The Alaska Legislature received the affirmative recommendation of the LBC regarding the City of Manokotak's annexation on January 27, 2017 and took no action. Under Article 10, section 12 of the Alaska constitution, if, after 45 days, the legislature takes no action, a boundary change takes effect. The City of Manokotak increased from 36 square miles to approximately 108 square miles, effective March 13, 2017.

### **WHALE PASS**

Whale Pass, a community of approximately 50 people on Prince of Wales Island in southeast Alaska, became the 145th and newest city on January 19, 2017. The LBC approved Whale Pass's petition in August 2016 and the community voted 34-12 to incorporate. Whale Pass held its first election in October 2017.

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## **COMMUNITIES THAT EXPRESSED INTEREST IN BOUNDARY CHANGES**

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City officials or residents of the following communities have reached out to staff seeking information on boundary changes, but have not yet submitted formal petitions. In many cases, residents or city officials are simply seeking information; however, others are actively planning and preparing proposals to submit to the LBC.

### **CITY OF ANGOON**

A resident of Angoon called LBC staff regarding the City of Angoon's interest in annexing the rest of Admiralty Island. Staff sent pertinent annexation documents and explained the difference between the legislative review and the local action petition processes. Staff offered to be of further assistance and also provided the name and contact information of the division's local government specialist that serves Angoon.

### **CITY OF BETTLES**

A member of the Bettles City Council called to discuss the possibility of dissolving the City of Bettles, which has fewer than 20 residents. He called again to report that the city council voted unanimously not to dissolve the city government based on a survey that indicated residents did not have strong opinions about dissolution. The city council member wrote that the consensus seemed to be that the community wants to put the contention surrounding the issue behind it. He further opined that the city needed an organizational voice with the state, especially regarding airport leasing. He said that dissolution is still an option for the future, if the Bettles voters want it, but he recognized that dissolution would entail a great deal of effort. He said he had encouraged people to be involved in the Bettles city government.

### CITY OF BREVIG MISSION

The City of Brevig Mission grants writer asked about annexing Port Clarence Bay on the western side of Seward Peninsula to the city. He and the two village residents, who depend on subsistence living, are concerned about pollution from human waste discharge into Port Clarence Bay where a lot of hunting and fishing occurs. He also is concerned about trash and its effect on public health resulting from the possible development of a Point Spencer deep water port by the Bering Straits Native Corporation. The contact asked about the options, including annexation, in order to help police the bay for pollutants. Staff provided information about the LBC and the annexation process and encouraged him to contact the staff again if he had any more questions.

### CHENA HOT SPRINGS

Two separate residents of Chena Hot Springs expressed interest in detaching an area from the Fairbanks North Star Borough and forming a new borough. Staff sent both individuals information, including the final reports and decisions for the Skagway, Petersburg, and Wrangell borough incorporation petitions. Staff also sent sample petition forms and explained the difference between the legislative review method and the local option method.

### CITY OF CLARK'S POINT

The City of Clark's Point reached out to LBC staff to discuss interest in annexing water near the city and Ekuk. Staff provided the city with the appropriate materials. Clark's Point indicated they would likely use the legislative review method, but did not offer any timeline for when a petition might be submitted.

### CITY OF CORDOVA

A lobbyist for the City of Cordova contacted LBC staff on behalf of the city to start a conversation about borough formation. Staff provided him with the new information packet on borough formation. Staff found a number of other relevant documents in the files, including the model borough boundaries, borough feasibility studies from 1997 and 1988, and an overview of historical activities relating to borough formation in the Prince William Sound area. Staff encouraged the lobbyist to let the mayor and council know they can reach out directly to staff when they have additional questions moving forward.

### GIRDWOOD

A Girdwood resident asked LBC staff about detachment procedures. Because the resident did not know much about the process and LBC requirements, staff provided her with information on the history of the Municipality of Anchorage, other relevant detachment proposals (such as Eagle River's attempts to detach), as well as the legal standards and overview documents on detachment from boroughs. Staff emailed the documents and asked her to call or email if she has additional questions about the next steps.



### CITY OF HOONAH

A local government specialist (LGS) based in Juneau contacted LBC staff to relate that the City of Hoonah is pursuing efforts to learn about borough incorporation. He said that Hoonah feels that annexation of their city by the City and Borough of Sitka, City and Borough of Juneau, or possibly the Ketchikan Gateway Borough is inevitable. The LGS said that this sentiment is a common theme in Southeast. The City of Hoonah has retained a law firm to help it explore borough formation in order to fend off a possible annexation by another borough. The LGS also reported that Gustavus is interested in borough formation, and that Tenakee Springs is concerned about being annexed. LBC staff sent the LGS new publications on borough incorporation and borough annexation.

Staff emphasized that borough annexation is not automatic or necessarily inevitable, and that all petitions must go through the petition process and need LBC approval to take effect. The final step falls either with the legislature (in the case of a legislative review petition), or with an election, which requires a majority in both the annexing area and the area to be annexed (in the case of a local action petition).

### CITY OF HOUSTON

Staff spoke with the City of Houston city clerk and learned Houston is interested in annexing territory. The clerk indicated that the city would likely use the local action method, either by holding an election or by using the unanimous consent method. Staff reviewed the petition methods and timelines with her and sent relevant publications, including a blank petition form and new LBC resource materials.

The city clerk was interested in determining the responsible entity for conducting and covering the cost of an annexation election. Staff let her know that an annexation election is conducted by ballot question inside the annexing city and inside the territory proposed for annexation; a majority must be reached in each area for annexation to pass. Staff also noted that the LBC does not have an approximate cost for conducting an election, but that annexation elections are the purview of the city seeking annexation, not the Alaska Division of Elections. Staff suggested that the city clerk could contact other similarly sized cities to ask about their experiences with special elections and for cost estimates. LBC staff also suggested the possibility of holding any such election concurrently with the regular election in October 2018.

### CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU

According to an August 16, 2017 Juneau Empire article, the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) is interested in annexing two areas on Admiralty Island, as well as an area between it and the Petersburg Borough. All three areas are in the unorganized borough. The City of Angoon is the only community on Admiralty Island. CBJ officials are attempting to arrange a meeting with the Angoon City Council to discuss the possible annexation. The CBJ manager said that Juneau wanted to contact Angoon to hear its ideas about the possible annexation.

The area between the Juneau and Petersburg boroughs, which includes the Tracy Arm-Ford's Terror Wilderness Area, was included in the CBJ's postponed 2011 annexation petition. The area was also included in the 2011 Petersburg Borough incorporation petition. In 2012, the LBC approved the Petersburg Borough incorporation petition, but did not grant the Tracy Arm area to Petersburg. As a result, the area remains in the unorganized borough.

On January 22, 2018, the Juneau Assembly voted to direct its staff to prepare and submit a legislative review annexation petition for four different areas including three on Admiralty Island, and the area between Juneau and the Petersburg Borough including Tracy Arm. At a subsequent meeting, the assembly voted to remove Funter Bay from the areas sought by a new annexation petition. Staff expects a petition sometime in 2018.

### KODIAK ISLAND BOROUGH

A member of the Kodiak Island Borough Assembly asked LBC staff for information regarding past consolidation efforts. He is interested in hiring a consultant to start exploring the process for consolidating the Kodiak Island Borough with the City of Kodiak. Staff provided him with general information on consolidation, as well as the petitions, reports, and decisions for the consolidation efforts for the Haines Borough, Ketchikan Gateway Borough, and Fairbanks North Star Borough.

### PORTAGE

Division and LBC staff spoke with a resident of Portage, a community within the Municipality of Anchorage. The resident feels that her community does not get services commensurate with the taxes they pay and that Portage does not have much in common with the rest of the Municipality of Anchorage. She is interested in detaching Portage from the municipality and annexing it to either Whittier or the Kenai Peninsula Borough. Staff answered her questions and provided her with relevant information on detachment and annexation.

### CITY OF SELDOVIA

The City of Seldovia is interested in annexation by the unanimous consent local option method. The Seldovia city manager asked about the city's obligation to provide water and sewer to a territory proposed for annexation. Staff answered that the first class city is not obligated by law to provide water and sewer to the territory. The city manager also sought information on the annexation by unanimous consent petition method. He has four landowners interested in annexation and wanted to know how initiating a petition worked. Staff informed him that he needed the signature of all four landowners and a city ordinance.

### CITY OF SOLDOTNA

The City of Soldotna is undertaking a process of public engagement to determine future annexations. The city planner has updated LBC staff periodically about the city's progress. The public engagement process began in August 2017 and should take approximately six

months, at which time the city council will likely vote on whether to draft a petition to the LBC. The city is still undecided as to how much land will be annexed and what method will be used (legislative review or local action). Staff asked the city to keep the LBC informed as they make progress or if they have questions.

#### TALKEETNA

There are local concerns about how the Matanuska-Susitna Borough handles a number of matters affecting Talkeetna. Talkeetna has petitioned to incorporate as a city before; residents are not interested in pursuing that possibility again.

Since as early as 2015, Talkeetna residents have been interested in detaching an area from the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and forming a new borough. The proposed borough borders would reach to the Denali Borough. LBC staff has sent residents a borough detachment and incorporation petition form. If such a petition was filed using the local option method and the LBC approved it, the commission's decision would be subject to approval by voters of the area proposed for detachment and concurrent incorporation.

Because many Talkeetna residents have asked about borough detachment and concurrent borough incorporation, LBC staff has made an electronic mailing list to provide as many people as possible with pertinent information.

#### CITY OF THORNE BAY

A resident from Thorne Bay contacted LBC staff and described the inequities he perceives between different areas within the City of Thorne Bay. He expressed his desire to pursue detachment. It was unclear whether he intended to simply detach or to detach and incorporate a new city. Staff informed him that a petition is required to pursue boundary changes, which requires the signatures of 25 percent of the registered voters in the territory proposed for detachment. The resident stated he simply wished to be heard before the LBC on the matter. Staff let him know that there is an established petition process for boundary changes and the LBC will not take any action without a pending petition. Since the issues the resident described are primarily local government concerns, staff alerted the appropriate division local government specialist to assist.

## **ACTIVITIES OF THE BOARD AND STAFF**

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The Local Boundary Commission held six meetings in 2017. LBC staff received no new petitions in 2017; the two active petitions from the City of Sand Point and Nikiski both halted proceedings. Staff fielded questions from residents across the state as well as from municipalities and persons interested in boundary changes. LBC staff anticipates several petitions in 2018, but the formal process does not begin until they are submitted. In the meantime, staff has been busy adding to and updating its library of publications that are available on the LBC website. Staff continues to work toward having more information and more petition materials available electronically. LBC staff also works with colleagues within the Division of Community and Regional Affairs to expand their understanding of communities around the state.

In March 2017, Debra Mack took the place of Darroll Hargraves, who resigned his post representing the third judicial district on the commission effective January 31, 2017. Ms. Mack is originally from Sand Point, Alaska and studied business at the University of Alaska Fairbanks via distance education. She served as municipal clerk for the City of Sand Point from 1979 to 1991 and then served as the municipal clerk for the City of Unalaska from 1991 until 2009, when she moved to Anchorage. Ms. Mack also served on the Aleutians East Borough Assembly from 1987 to 1991. She currently serves on the board of directors of the Aleut Corporation and works part time as a court reporter for Kron Associates. Her term on the LBC ends January 31, 2022.

LBC Chair Lynn Chrystal did not seek another term when his ended on January 31, 2018. Mr. Chrystal was appointed to the commission in 2007 by Governor Sarah Palin. He was appointed chair in 2009. Although he now lives in Wasilla, Mr. Chrystal lived in Valdez for 39 years and served as the mayor of Valdez and as a member of the city council. He retired in 2002 from the federal government after four years in the Air Force and 36 years with the National Weather Service.

Governor Bill Walker appointed Lamar Cotten to be the new LBC chair beginning February 1, 2018. Mr. Cotten previously served on the LBC as the member from the third judicial district from 1988 to 1993. Mr. Cotten served as deputy commissioner when DCRA was the Department of Community and Regional Affairs, rather than a division within the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development. He also has extensive experience as a municipal manager at both the city and borough levels. Mr. Cotten currently works as a community development consultant. His term extends through January 31, 2023.

Three other commissioners serve on the LBC: Bob Harcharek, of Utqiagvik, John Harrington, of Ketchikan, and Lavell Wilson, of Tok.

## CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSION

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The LBC did not service a large number of petitions in 2017, but the active petitions brought important policy questions to the forefront. Discussions of issues raised in 2017 will likely continue in 2018. Several additional communities also indicated they are planning or preparing petitions to come before the LBC, possibly in 2018.

While there are currently no active local boundary change petitions before the LBC, staff expects to field questions on many more potential boundary changes in the coming year. Many additional communities have inquired about pursuing boundary changes as a means to correct perceived inequities or problems in their communities. LBC staff works closely with Division of Community and Regional Affairs colleagues to help communities with these issues.

The LBC is pleased to continue serving the people of Alaska by fulfilling its constitutionally mandated authority to consider any proposed local government boundary change. The staff is also pleased to continue providing assistance to the public and potential petitioners.

