

Local Boundary Commission staff
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February 25, 2011

RE: City of Dillingham Annexation - Public Comment on Preliminary Report

Dear Local Boundary Commission:

I would like to urge the LBC to support the City of Dillingham annexation petition. I strongly agree with the following statements made on pp. 66-67 of the Preliminary Report and provide further comment for each:

1. “[Annexation] would ensure a stronger, more vibrant local government...The city is the appropriate government for the territory because the rest of the region’s communities need a stronger regional hub for their sustainability. LBC staff finds that the annexation is necessary to sustain the city, thereby sustaining the regional hub. If the city were to continue its fiscal course, without annexation approval, the state could be forced to step in and assist Dillingham in order to maintain the economic integrity of the city and region.”

As a private citizen who has made a choice to make a life here in Bristol Bay, I am concerned with what I perceive as deterioration in the past 5 years of basic maintenance of basic services the City of Dillingham is mandated to provide. I believe annexation will help the city get beyond treading deep water that is just getting deeper and deeper as the cost of fuel and the general cost of living increases. A few examples are: the paved roads leading to town have disintegrated, the library roof is leaking, the downtown fire station doors do not fit the fire trucks, and the harbor near the picnic park is washing away with the tides. Due to lack of financial resources, the city barely has capacity to keep up with basic maintenance of essential services for its year-long residents and visitors, let alone keeping up with the vast increase in demand of essential services during fish season, or the resources to increase or improve services for its residents and those who visit from other villages or from outside. Further essential services including public safety, public works, sewage, garbage disposal and the 911 emergency services provided by KDLG, are used by every resident and visitor to Dillingham, including the commercial fishermen no matter where they originate from. I believe Dillingham to be at serious risk of an unsustainable situation with diminished financial capacity but same or increasing demand for services.

2. “Without the approval of this annexation, Dillingham’s economy or its population could potentially decline dramatically....Would the hospital be able to recruit and retain sufficient professional staff? Would the media still be able to maintain operations in the region without a strong regional hub? Would there be as many government offices and employees? Would the Bristol Bay Campus of the University of Alaska Fairbanks remain open?” “If the city...diminishes, the other communities will also fade because there will not a hub to depend on, directly or

indirectly. Should annexation not be approved, we do not see a bright or sustainable future for Dillingham. LBC staff feels that Dillingham would diminish in time, and would not be able to serve the region as it does now. This would hurt the entire region.”

With First Class status, the city of Dillingham is responsible for its schools. I have witnessed deterioration in retention of high quality teachers to this area, as the school district has not had, among other things, the financial capacity to provide competitive incentive recruitment packages. As an employee of UAF Bristol Bay Campus, we have an increasing number of classes and large events that bring a lot of visitors to Dillingham who are in need of lodging, transportation and food. Bristol Bay Campus, besides being the only post-secondary institution that serves Bristol Bay region and provides essential local educational opportunities, it is a major economic driver in the region with an estimated \$4M in economic activity. If City of Dillingham is not sustainable, the university is at risk of not being able to fulfill its education mission and at risk of closing down. This has implications for every child in the Bristol Bay region, not just Dillingham.

3. “LBC staff finds that approving the annexation would increase the odds of a borough being formed... if the annexation is approved, the region would see the benefits of the resulting severance or sales tax revenue, and how it could help a borough. That realization of benefits could spur borough formation.”

I am encouraged to read that annexation will only help this community should its citizens decide to form a borough. We can build a thriving, sustainable future for the generations to come if we come together as a region and do what will be most beneficial to the collective whole. The old cliché is a good one...the sum is greater than its parts...I believe annexation is a step towards a greater sum which will benefit the community as a whole, the community I have chosen to live in.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Preliminary Report to the Local Boundary Commission.

Sincerely,

Michele Masley

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