

From: richardmcgahan
To: [Collins, Eileen M. \(CED\)](mailto:Collins, Eileen M. (CED))
Subject: Additional comments on Nikiski Incorporation
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Comments regarding Nikiski Incorporation:

My additional comments are to show why it is time for Nikiski to have local government to determine Nikiski's needs and to provide for those needs. It is time for "self determination" in Nikiski. And I believe that with local government we can have more limited government and provide for Nikiski's services with fewer funds. We have had a professional economic analysis done by Northern Economics which shows that we may be able to actually provide those services better, and also lower taxes. Since we have an industrial base that pays a set amount to the state, and our taxes are deducted from that amount, the state will also benefit from this.

This year I will have been a Nikiski resident for 53 years. I'd like to relate some history as to demonstrate why having our own council will be a benefit for Nikiski. When we voted for a Recreational Service Area to build a swimming pool, it was not without a prolonged effort to have that built by the Borough School District. This was not an unusual idea. The Borough School District was providing pools to other areas included with the school. The first pool was built in Seldovia and the second was built in Homer. We had the Nikiski Elementary School and the land next to it, where the pool is presently. It was logical to have a pool built there. Also, we have set-netting families all up and down the beaches in Nikiski where children work with their families. We are one of those commercial fishing families. My children had swimming lessons in the lakes. (I remember their legs actually turning blue!) The community of Nikiski also needed a pool. But regardless of our efforts and communication with the Borough Assembly, since the majority of assembly members do not live in Nikiski, we are not considered their constituents and we could not get a pool built at our school. We are paying taxes for our schools just as the taxpayers in the other areas are, but in order to finally get the pool, we had to tax ourselves separately as the North Peninsula Recreation Service Area. We had a vote and that's how we finally got the pool. (The Nikiski Elementary School was eventually closed and is now part of the Recreation Area buildings. Another school was built called Nikiski North Star Elementary. This was during the oil boom and population boom.) My relating that history is to explain that the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly members are voted in by district. At present we have one member and there are eight from other areas. Those other areas do not embrace industry and are quite different from Nikiski, socially and economically. Also, the assembly members consider their districts as their constituents, since those voters vote for them, and others cannot vote them out of office. However, the difficulty is that they vote AT LARGE. So, they vote for or against our area but we have no say in their election. Local government with council members who live here, in Nikiski, will benefit Nikiski.

I was an elected Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly Member from Nikiski in the 1980s and I will give you another example. There was a junior high and high school in Kenai and a junior high and high school in Soldotna (So-Hi). The residents of Nikiski took a census to show the Borough government why a high school was needed in Nikiski. 500 students were being bussed 20 miles (some more and some less) to the high school in Kenai. These were junior high and high school age students. Some students were on the bus one and one half hour one way to school. That's three hours per day of their life on the bus. (The busses go around the loop roads to pick up students.) We couldn't even get the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly Members to allow the school to be put on the ballot for a vote. As an assembly member, I finally had to agree to put another school on the ballot as a compromise, in order to allow a vote for the Nikiski Junior/Senior High School. (That school was Skyview High School, approximately 3 miles from the other Soldotna High School.) This seemed unneeded and I was embarrassed to have to vote for it, but that was how I was able to get the assembly members from the other areas to allow a vote for the Nikiski school. Of course, schools will still be provided by the borough, even after the incorporation of Nikiski. This is just to explain how difficult it has been for Nikiski to have representation from the larger entity of the borough.

I think it is definitely time for Nikiski to determine our own future and to incorporate.

Karen McGahan
54025 Kenai Spur Hwy.
Kenai, Alaska 99611 (mailing address)

Residential address:
Mile 29.3 North Road
Nikiski, Alaska 99635