

From: [Joanne Hardesty](#)
To: [Collins, Eileen M. \(CED\)](#)
Subject: I am FOR the Incorporation of Nikiski
Date: Wednesday, February 08, 2017 1:31:25 PM

ATTN: Eileen M. Collins (CED)
Local Boundary Commission
Dept. of Commerce, Community and Economic Development

Dear Ms. Collins:

I am fully in support of the Incorporation of Nikiski into a home rule city. I have lived in Nikiski since January 1981 (36 years) and have been an Alaska resident since 1964.

Initially I was opposed to the incorporation because I made some incorrect assumptions. I assumed it would raise taxes dramatically, however, after hearing about the study done by Northern Economics, and reviewing their figures, I realized that the opposite was true. Their study shows that a newly formed city of Nikiski would have 1.7 million left over and the voters of Nikiski would decide what to do with it. Which leads me to my second reason for wanting to incorporate...

For too long our Borough Assembly has frustrated me by voting against the wishes of the Nikiski residents. There are nine people on the borough assembly and we have one lone vote. Our current borough assemblyman does an excellent job of fighting for us and also does an excellent job of keeping abreast of all the goings on at the borough level, but he has only one vote. In a home rule city we would have a say in local government. Our city council would consist of elected Nikiski residents, and the people of Nikiski would have a voice and a vote in what goes on in our community. For instance, when the possibility that an LNG (liquefied natural gas) plant could be built in Nikiski, and in order to do that roads would have to be moved and built - not one Nikiski resident was asked to join in the discussion to develop that plan. The discussion included representation from Fairbanks, Nenana, Anderson, the Denali Borough, Wasilla and others, BUT NOT NIKISKI, where the terminus was proposed.

Another huge concern is that the Kenai Peninsula Borough is headed toward centralization. This has already happened with our Road Service Area and diminished our services that were formerly done more efficiently with a locally elected road service board which listened to us and were quite concerned with our concerns. Whenever centralization takes place, and control goes farther away from the services offered, quality diminishes, local concerns are not understood by those far away, and local voice almost disappears. That is what I have personally witnessed with the centralization of our road board. The Nikiski Road Service board was formed when in 1981 Nikiski voters decided to tax themselves and take care of their own roads. Shortly after that three other areas in the Kenai Peninsula Borough also formed their own road boards. In 1991 the Borough Assembly wanted to merge all the road boards and our rep and three other area reps objected. It was openly stated that they wanted access to Nikiski tax dollars. So five people decided to merge the service areas without going to a vote of the people which were represented by the other four area representatives. Which leads me to my concerns about our Fire Department.

Right now Nikiski can boast about our specialty-trained, unique and awesome Nikiski Fire Department. With the KPB headed towards centralizing all the fire departments, this poses a grave risk for Nikiski

residents, at least in my mind. With centralization causing a natural decline in services, our first class fire department would be forced to lose resources they now have and would cause a diminishment in our specialty-trained people since department transfers around the borough would also be a natural result of centralization. My husband works at the Tesoro Refinery and I have all confidence in the Nikiski Fire Department, I would not have so much in a borough operated fire department that does not understand the unique fire-fighting needs of an industrialized area. Right now our department employees are cross-trained and receive specialty training in high angle, confined space, industrial fire-fighting (we have a refinery, oil platforms, etc. in Nikiski), cold water surface and dive rescue. Nikiski Fire Department effectively serves a population of about 5,500 people over a 6,000 square mile area that includes Cook Inlet with all its platforms, and major industrial complexes such as Tesoro Refinery, along with Tyonek and Beluga. They respond to 900 calls a year. We have four fire stations, two on the North Road, one in Tyonek and one in Beluga. Our fire department also does training with our Beluga and Tyonek stations. As a city, we could keep and improve our fire department, add another station to help our citizens reduce their fire insurance costs, and keep our area safer. This would not happen if we remain a borough entity.

I also believe that a public private partnership that leaves the work up to private contractors who are bidding for the jobs, is the way to go. It cuts down on government expenditures with outsourced services. There is not a huge governmental infrastructure weighing on the backs of residents. Better quality is achieved by competitive bidding and contract reviews - if a contractor is not performing as required, they can be replaced. Our city would have no debt. The borough does not share this vision with Nikiski. This cannot be done unless we incorporate.

Once again, I fully support the incorporation of Nikiski for the reasons above and many more. In summary I do not want to see the diminishment of our services continue, I want to see Nikiski residents have a voice in the direction of our community and I would love to see us running our city more efficiently financially and quality of services improved. Thanks for taking the time to hear my comments.

Sincerely,

Joanne Hardesty
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