

Why I support Nikiski Incorporation:

Nikiski, the place I call home, is a unique area composed of people with a different set of independent life styles. I moved to Nikiski in the early 1980's, falling in love with the area and people. This is where I met and married the love of my life, Jasper, and chose to raise our family. Nikiski has been where my husband found employment in the oilfield. In our younger days, he worked across the inlet at Trading Bay and Drift River, while eventually moving to the different platforms in the inlet. In the early 1990's, he was offered a position with Unocal, that soon transferred to Agrium. Jasper was one of the fortunate individuals able to find employment after the shutdown of Agrium. We have continued to remain in Nikiski, where we are enjoying watching and helping our children raise the next generation.

Why incorporation? While the people of Nikiski have been sleeping, the borough has been busy changing our self-governing ideologies. Changes have occurred and continually are discussed without honoring the self determination of the people of Nikiski. As residents, we have established and maintained service areas through a vote of the people. The history Nikiski has on file with the LBC is absolutely amazing. Seeing the foundation of self-determination established at state level by the Nikiski resident speaks volumes of who we are. With research time invested by our group, I would not like to see all of our hard work be destroyed by the borough.

The Nikiski Fire service area was established by the people, for the people who live in tax areas 53, 54, and 55 on August 19, 1969. This is the first fire service area created in the borough. The services provided by our four fire stations are unique to this area, due to the size and area needs. I have been involved in the fire services my entire life, knowing that all fire services and equipment are not equal. Each piece of equipment and personnel must meet the needs of the area. Two of our stations are located on the Kenai Spur Highway, while the other two are located in Beluga and Tyonek. All equipment, training, and management have been provided by Nikiski. We have established and proved over decades our ability to meet the needs of the area and still plan for the future without an increase of taxes. We also have the land, equipment, and personnel to build another station in our area located on the Escape Road, without needing to increase taxes because of forethought and planning by our elected Nikiski Fire Service Board. This speaks volumes to Nikiski's ability to self-govern. Our current borough assembly is discussing the idea of closing down fire station one and putting in a draft sight. This would be extremely detrimental to our area residents that live in the proximity of our industry. All one needs to do is go on the internet and research the devastation caused by a refinery or industry explosion or chemical leak. This community has planned for such things with our industry.

Our North Peninsula Recreation Service Area was established in 1974, after a group of residents went to the borough seeking a pool for our area. We were denied, so in our continuing Nikiski spirit of self-determination we chose to create, by a vote of the people, a new service area that also includes Tyonek. Nikiski residents once again established a tax base and voter elected board to govern the newly created service area. We have shown our ability with great success in this service so much that the City of Kenai was thinking of contracting our services to run theirs.

In October of 1993, the voters of Nikiski chose to create another service area for our seniors, to provide the services and programs they needed. They have been able to provide food in areas and now own a beautiful building that is even rented out for weddings from all over the peninsula. There is even senior housing available. This board has had absolute success in meeting the need and extras for our area seniors.

Four road service areas were created in 1982 upon voter approval. During the fiscal year of 1991-1992 the Borough Assembly consolidated the four service areas to provide for greater efficiency. In doing so area representation has become out of balance, by having only a 7 member board with a representative from each of the four areas and three appointed by the mayor with Assembly approval. This absolutely doesn't work in the best interest of the outer lying areas. Nikiski is referred to as the cash cow of the borough, which is a bit disheartening. I have always referred to Alaska and Hawaii being the red-headed step children of the United States, so why do we need to be that in our own borough? If you live on a State maintained road in Nikiski, you are a blessed individual. Our other roads are not in a good way. The alders have taken over so many of them, that I am fearful we could have a child hit and killed needlessly. As a taxpayer, according to the borough I need to have permission from them to remove those alders. The maintenance of our roads has not improved under the boroughs greater efficiency plan of 91-92. All you need to do is speak with the Fed Ex or UPS drivers and they will let you know where the worst roads on the Peninsula are, Nikiski. When speaking to other area residents about our roads their understanding is, "If you live in Nikiski, four-wheel drive is required." My question is why. Are we not paying to have our roads taken care of through our taxes? I can think of so many roads, that in 30 years have not improved but remain the same. What will happen with more people moving into the area, including businesses? One road in particular floods at least once every year and has for 32 years. In one instance, the residents called to inform the borough about the flooding and were told "We can put you in contact with the Red Cross." Mind you, it was not their home flooding but the road. My biggest concern would be our Escape Road maintenance. On so many occasions it has not been kept to the standard for which it was created. It is our communities' way out in case of a catastrophic industry event. Throughout the years snow removal has also been neglected for days, even weeks at a time, which is unacceptable. That has the equivalency of not fueling an emergency response vehicle and expecting an immediate action in a 911 situation. Upon the combining of our roads service areas, one of our Nikiski residents did take the borough to court on this very issue to be dismissed by the court stating he had no authority to represent Nikiski because we were not a recognized entity. Not having a local voted in road board for our Nikiski area greatly hinders the care and maintenance of our roads. History has proven that Nikiski residents can maintain and provide services for our area.

The probability of a new LNG plant coming to Nikiski is a very big thing for our residents. Will this new plant affect our community? Yes and already it has. It has displaced a good number of our friends and family, whether they wanted to move or not. The borough has established their LNG team, without including representation from the Nikiski area. What is even more concerning is that we have established Nikiski Area Service Boards which have not been contacted? All service areas will be affected in one way or another.

As a long time Nikiski resident, I see the accountability to the citizens being increased by incorporating. A city can be more efficient at decision making since authority is delegated to an elected local council having rules established by the residents of Nikiski. As a city, we could more efficiently provide to the services already established by the people of Nikiski. Of the three service areas still remaining under the elected direction of Nikiski residents, we have shown our ability to self-govern. Our service areas have been established now for decades, giving us the history and record of proof. When we lost the power over our roads, the services were diminished. We are a uniquely different community. People just don't come to Nikiski to stop and visit or run errands, they go to Kenai or Soldotna to do that. That's where the utility companies, medical facilities, grocery stores and many other things are located. Those are centralized areas providing services they deemed necessary. For Soldotna or Kenai, that has different needs, to tell Nikiski how to function as a City is just not applicable. An apple, pear, and an orange are all fruit but very different. I absolutely believe incorporation will allow the people of Nikiski to retain and preserve their way of life according to their ideologies and history.