

**From:** [Sharon Hillis](#)  
**To:** [WPCA GOOGLE GROUP](#); [Whale Pass Community Association](#); [Commission, Boundary \(CED sponsored\)](#)  
**Subject:** Whale Pass Petition Comments  
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## **Whale Pass Petition Comments**

The comments on the Whale Pass website about becoming a second-class city gives compelling positive arguments – get money, get grants, get land, control our own destiny, etc.

None of the negative aspects have been addressed.

### **Seven Council members**

One of the requirements in the petition is to have a seven member council. Right now, the Whale Pass Community Association has a five member board of directors. Two of these members are not Whale Pass residents. One member was elected and he was not even at the annual meeting when he was elected. As far as I can determine, he has never attended a board meeting, even though meeting access is usually available by phone conference. This member has never been replaced although he has been on the board for a couple years. The current board has problems in the winter holding a meeting because of absent board members. How are we going to elect **seven** people to be on the city council that will live here on a permanent basis and will hold monthly meetings? I believe the people that run the city government should be full-time residents who understand what is needed and have first hand knowledge of the activities in Whale Pass. Will the council members be paid to attract more candidates? Council member pay is not in the budget.

### **We will get free land that is like money in the bank.**

We may get the land, but it will be very expensive to subdivide it. Those of us who live here bought our land knowing what borders our property. Land that will be granted to the city will border current subdivisions. When land is subdivided into new lots they will border current subdivisions. One of the reasons we live here is because our land borders state land. I personally don't want people living on the state land behind us. How will they gain access to their property? Will the city of Whale Pass build roads into the new property? There are easements along the edge of most lots. But these easements are for utilities not roads. The Whale Pass Community Assn bylaws state that property owners are responsible for building their own access roads. Will this now become a city responsibility? Where will we get the money to subdivide the land or build the roads? Will an environmental impact study be required before land is subdivided? That is not included in the proposed budget. Selling more land means a higher population. This puts more demand on services and requires more money. Our natural resources (deer, firewood, etc.) are becoming harder to access because the Forest Service has closed most of the spur roads in the Tongass National Forest. The road to Neck Lake is paved, and more people are concentrated in smaller areas for the same resource. More people living in Whale Pass stresses these resources even more.

## **Our money will come from the state and the tourist industry.**

The state is in a budget crisis. The revenue-sharing for communities like ours will be gone in a couple years. The revenue-sharing for cities is being cut. The state is also cutting important programs like education. If these budget woes continue, the cities may shoulder more of the financial burden and not receive much, if any, money. Grants are becoming scarce. That will mean higher taxes of some kind on the people here. It has been stated that we will not have property taxes until a borough takes over and assesses the value of our property. The borough will collect the property tax and return it to the city. There is no guarantee that a Prince of Wales borough formation will be passed by the voters of Prince of Wales Island. The scare tactics that the Ketchikan Gateway borough will annex Prince of Wales has been exposed as the fraud that it is. In order for Ketchikan to annex Prince of Wales into their borough, the Ketchikan voters would have to approve the acquisition. The Prince of Wales voters **in a separate vote** would have to approve the acquisition as well. If we become a city there will be those who will be in favor of forming a Prince of Wales borough simply to get the money that it will generate from property taxes. Many of the people who live here are on limited or fixed incomes and barely get by. Our property taxes will be high because Whale Pass has one of the highest property values on the island.

Much of our tourist industry is based on the SSRAA coho run. A fish box tax is one of the proposed income generators. How is this going to be enforced? Which businesses will be responsible for reporting and submitting the tax?

Another proposed tax is the bed tax. Many businesses take reservations even years in advance. Is it fair to the customer to pay extra money for a tax that may not have been in place when they made the reservation? How is this going to be enforced on the businesses?

Another tax is the sales tax. Does this apply to only things sold? Does it apply to services rendered? Will it apply to resident businesses or include businesses that do services here? (such as sewage pumping) How will this be enforced?

Will taxes paid be public knowledge? I don't think anyone's business income or number of guests should be public knowledge. Even if it is not available to the public the city administrator will have access to this information. This is a small community, and there is no guarantee that personal information will not be vocalized to other members of the community.

## **Government**

The money budgeted for the salary of the as city administrator is low. Will this be a part-time position? Will someone from Whale Pass be the administrator? Will someone from outside Whale Pass be recruited? It is unlikely that someone would move here for that particular job. If they have experience as a city administrator in another place, they would most likely expect Whale Pass to perform services that other cities provide meaning more money will be required.

This is a big step in creating local government control over Whale Pass. The intentions may be good, and the promise of no property tax is probably proposed honestly. Government only breeds more control and more government, meaning more control and more government growth, requiring more money. It is the nature of the beast.

People have been trained to expect the government to provide and care for them.

Self responsibility and self reliability are becoming scarce qualities.

### **Questions**

Few of my questions can be answered at this time. We will have to wait and see what our council decides to put in our city charter. When Coffman Cove became a city there were major growing pains. Many people regretted that Coffman Cove had chosen to become a city. Becoming a city is easy compared to dissolving one. If the registered voters of Whale Pass vote no on the second-class petition, in two years they can vote to become a city again. Postponing this big decision would give us a better idea of where the state budget and economy are headed. We would still be receiving revenue-sharing money in the next two years.

My recommendation is to think hard and long and realize what you are voting for when you cast your ballot. This vote can put Whale Pass on a path that will fundamentally change our community.

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Integrity is doing the right thing when no one is watching.