

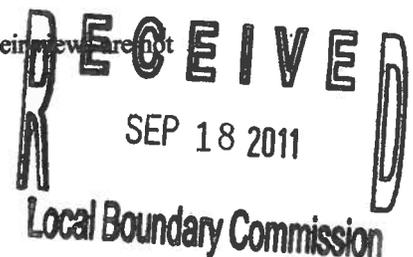
Keene Channel Residents Against The Borough

Comments For The Local Boundary Commission Regarding The Formation Of The Petersburg Borough

From Discussions With 13 of the 18
Registered Voters Who Live On Keene Channel¹
Who Signed This Document

Prepared By George Cole
Keene Channel
September 2011

¹ Discussion was held with 2 of the 4 residents who favor borough formation. Their views are not represented in this document.



October 18, 2011
Keene Residents Against the Borough
Keene Channel, Alaska

Local Boundary Commission
Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development
550 W. 7th Avenue, Suite 1770
Anchorage, AK 99504

Dear Sirs:

We, the undersigned, oppose the formation of the Petersburg Borough. We believe the petition submitted by the City of Petersburg to be flawed and we believe the proposal does not meet the criteria set forth in AS 29.05.031 or in 3AAC 110.045 – 67.

Reasons given to form a borough, pages 2 and 3 of the petition:

The petition starts off by suggesting Petersburg is about to be placed into a borough by the State or about to be annexed into an existing borough¹. Both of these possibilities are farfetched at best. There is no evidence that either prospect is being considered by anyone other than Petersburg.

The incorporation proposal will not enhance Petersburg's regional identity. If anything, it will dilute and confuse their identity. In fact, they seem to be confused themselves as they are in the process of trying to 'brand' themselves to build an identity in the minds of prospective residents and businesses. They seem to not be aware the current city is already known far and wide as 'Little Norway'.

Borough proponents seem to believe that somehow the use of lands to the north of Petersburg is going to be denied them². There is no basis for this belief and an unfounded belief is not a reason to form a borough.

If the current City of Petersburg feels that those residing outside the city are not paying their fair share for goods and services obtained inside the city, they can establish a user fee for those goods and services. This would be a far preferable solution than to be forced into a borough where Petersburg can (and will if history teaches us anything) tax us without providing us with anything in return. We wonder how Petersburg residents would feel if Juneau or Seattle charged them a higher rate for goods and services because they don't pay property taxes in those communities.

We already enjoy individual rights and participate in public endeavors and do not need a borough to provide us with something we already have.

¹ See page 2, Section 6. Petition for Incorporation of Petersburg Home Rule Borough.

² Ibid.

The petition suggests that we are not enfranchised³. Nothing could be farther from the truth. We can vote in State and Federal elections and many of us do so. These elections give us all the voice we need or want in affairs that affect our immediate neighborhoods as well as the areas surrounding us. We have no desire to be a part of local government but prefer to deal with one another on a personal level, working out plans, differences, or social issues in a face-to-face manner.

Dividing Kupreanof Island in half is hardly following natural geographical features. Given the seeming strength with which Kake opposes this borough, it appears this division was made simply to keep Kake from having a voice in the process. It is highly unlikely borough proponents could have gotten the signatures needed to propel the petition forward had Kake been included, as it should have been.

Given the reality of redistricting, remaking Petersburg into a borough will do nothing towards strengthening their regional voice. Petersburg's voice will be 'but a whisper' according to one of their elected officials. Adding our few widely varied and discordant voices will do nothing to enhance the whisper. It will only serve to make it less distinct.

Borough proponents say that incorporation will create a regional government that will provide services in an efficient, fair, and cost-effective manner. The petition goes on to say they will not provide us any services that we don't want. Since we do not want any of their services, they are going to provide us nothing in an efficient, equitable, and cost-effective manner. Which came first, no service or no cost? How many additional employees will they need to provide us with nothing?

We fail to see how giving Petersburg more land will enhance our lifestyles or spur economic growth. If they would spend more time enhancing their own lifestyles and spurring economic growth and opportunities within the current City of Petersburg, they would attract more residents and businesses. Their recent kaffuffle over trying to spend \$1.5 million for private land for a storage yard when they have plenty of unused municipal land is a prime example of misdirected thinking. Not using their current city resources wisely should be reason to question how they plan to use additional resources as a borough.

There are none of us who are anti-borough just for the sake of being anti. If the petition set forth positive and tangible benefits for all proposed residents, there are many of us who would be in favor of it. Unfortunately, the petition with the attached charter is designed only to benefit the existing bureaucracy.

Statute and Administrative Code concerns:

While the language in many of the laws relating to borough formation are vague and open to interpretation we feel our construal carries the most weight because we will be

³ Page 3, Section 6. Petition for Incorporation of Petersburg Home Rule Borough

the persons who are most affected by any decision regarding the petition. We therefore ask that any findings you make in this matter lean our way whenever legally possible.

We do not think of ourselves as residents of Petersburg. Most of us get our mail and supplies in Petersburg. Some of us attend church and other social activities there. Almost all of us use Petersburg as our arrival and departure point to access our homes, cabins, or recreational lands. However, if Petersburg were not there, we would use Wrangell. If both were gone we would use Kake. Therefore, Petersburg is not our social, cultural, or economic core.

We are a disparate group with many different cultural beliefs with one exception. We view each other and ourselves as self-reliant individuals. We are not like residents of Petersburg who have chosen an urban lifestyle with all the attached restrictions, solutions, and diversions. We are not homogenous and it was with great difficulty that we managed to come together to oppose this petition.

The boundary of the proposed borough does not follow natural geography in such a way as to incorporate all areas necessary for full development of municipal services. Kake is on our island and was excluded, we suspect for reasons stated above. We live in an area where there will be no municipal services, fully developed or not.

Those of us who live in and around Keene Channel fall into three economic categories. We are retired, we own our own business, or we are engaged in commercial fishing. There are two families who own their own businesses. One is a part time kayaking lodge that takes 2 or 3 groups out each summer. The other owns a fruit and vegetable business based entirely inside the current City of Petersburg. A few of us are engaged in commercial fishing. The majority of us are retired or summer only visitors. There is absolutely and certainly not enough wealth or income in this area to support municipal services.

While most of us have boats or skiffs that we use for our transportation, there are no public transportation facilities available. Tides and weather frequently interfere with our plans and would seriously impede our ability to meaningfully participate in any local government. Most council meetings are held at night and this would preclude us from participating for half the calendar year.

The above paragraphs address criteria specified in AS 29 and 3 AAC.

3 AAC 110.055 speaks to resources both human and economic to address the delivery of essential municipal services in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The only service they will provide to us is to tell us how much we owe in taxes. This is hardly an essential (to us) municipal service. It will cost them more to inspect, assess, keep track of, and tax us than they will get in return through taxation. Looking at their own figures, they only expect to gain \$184,000 per year from the entire proposed borough⁴. It is unlikely that

⁴ See page 37 of the Petition for Incorporation of Petersburg Home Rule Borough

Arlene Williams Arlene Williams 9-9-11
(Signature) (Printed Name) (Date)

D Charlene Anderson D CHARLENE Anderson 9-7-11
(Signature) (Printed Name) (Date)

Ronald D. Anderson Donald D. Anderson 9-7-11
(Signature) (Printed Name) (Date)

William Johansen William J. Johansen 9-8-2011
(Signature) (Printed Name) (Date)

Ruth Johansen RUTH JOHANSEN 9-9-2011
(Signature) (Printed Name) (Date)

Kenneth W. Howard Kenneth W Howard 9-9-11
(Signature) (Printed Name) (Date)

Laura J. Howard LAURA J. HOWARD 9-9-11

Robert L Murray ROBERT L MURRAY 9/10/11
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Michael J Carpenter Michael J. Carpenter 9/11/11
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Larry J Haugen LARRY HAUGEN 9/11/11
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