


 This message was sent with high importance.
Attachments can contain viruses that may harm your computer. Attachments may not display correctly.

Commission, Boundary (CED sponsored)

From: Ken Howard [klhowardak@aol.com] **Sent:** Sun 10/23/2011 10:25 AM
To: Commission, Boundary (CED sponsored)
Cc: Williams, Brent R (CED); brian.bitzer@alaska.gov
Subject: Public Comment on Proposed Petersburg Borough Petition
Attachments:  [Local Boundary Commission.doc\(60KB\)](#)

Please let me know that you received this email and my attached comments (5 pages). I mailed a hard copy on Tuesday, Alaska Day to your office. Thank you for your time.

Ken Howard

RECEIVED
OCT 23 2011
Local Boundary Commission

Local Boundary Commission
Alaska Dept. of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development
550 W. 7th Avenue, Suite 1770
Anchorage, AK 99501-3510
(LBC@alaska.gov)

Comment regarding the Petition for Borough by the City of Petersburg

Kenneth W. Howard
PO Box 2067
Petersburg, AK 99833
907-340-6885
klhowardak@aol.com

Residence: Lot 32 Blk 2 ASLS 81-8

I am retired and live on Kupreanof Island approximately fifteen miles south of the city of Petersburg. My wife and I chose to live a rural life style over an urban or city life style. We knew we would be responsible for all services and infrastructure required to maintain our desired life style. We built our own shop/home, dock, mooring float, electrical power system, domestic and waste water systems as well as means of transportation. We are proud to say we get all domestic power from hydro and solar.

We do purchase supplies and food as well as receive some medical and dental care in Petersburg.

Our social, cultural, and economic activities and interests are tied largely to our neighborhood. In part because we are mostly all retired and share similar interests, desires and needs. We are largely implants from other areas. Most have no Norwegian Heritage as is prevalent in Petersburg.

Economically the differences are more striking. Most proponents of the borough are Petersburg public employees, city, state, and the federal government are large employers in town. These people enjoy good wages, with cost of living increases as well as good medical insurance benefits and retirement plans.

As a major fishing port, Petersburg brings in millions of dollars to the community and city coffers.

For the majority of us in the out lying areas are retired. We live off fixed incomes. I should not have to elaborate on how our retirement accounts are doing in the present economy. Therefore we are very monetarily conservative by nature. We watch with dismay how the city chooses to tax and spend. Therefore our lifestyles are not homogenous with the majority of Petersburg citizens. We have much more in common with our close knit neighborhood. We look after and take care of each other.

Therefore it is my opinion the proposed Petersburg Borough does not meet the standards required by AS 29.05.031 (a) (1) and 3AAC 110.045(a) as stated in its borough petition page 10 section (C). I don't think it would be in error to claim our most common bond with the City of Petersburg is that we all have a box at the local Post Office.

Where I live and, most of my neighbors, telephone service is provided by cell towers. These towers are located to serve the greater populated areas nearer Petersburg. Our telephone reception is off and on at best. To get any service we have installed external antennas coupled with boosters. Others have to walk down the beach or get into a boat and find an area that will get reception. There is no land line service available. Some of us do have internet service through Starband Satellite. Internet connections are directly affected by weather conditions, fog, rain, and snow can interrupt service. We communicate by personal visit, VHF radio, or email for those of us who have internet service. Often a special trip to town is required to make an important appointment or communication. Our most reliable means to receive a message in our outlying areas is called a "Muskeg Message". This service is provided by our local radio station, KFSK. This service while important does not provide a way to have a conversation or communicate with others.

We travel almost exclusively by open skiff. My wife and I are one of few who have a sheltered cabin. All travel is dependent on weather, tide, and visibility. There are no scheduled boat services to aid in our commute to Petersburg. Air service via float plane is available out of Petersburg as well as a water taxi service is available part of the year out of Wrangell. Both services are dependant on weather and daylight and either would be very expensive if they were available. I have never seen any neighbors use either service to commute to town.

City council meetings as well as most City meetings and functions are held in the city and in the evening, well after dark for much of the year. Most of us, for safety reasons, only travel after dark in emergencies. To attend a council meeting for much of the year would require an overnight stay in town. When you factor in monies for food, lodging, and transportation costs, the trip alone could add up to several hundreds of dollars or more, a very expensive and impractical way to participate in local government.

Therefore the proposed borough petition does not meet the requirements in AS29.05.031 (a) (4) and AAC 110.045 (c) and (d).

In the Petersburg petition section 18 “Supporting Brief” exhibit G (1), they claim, “The boundaries of the proposed borough conform generally to natural geography” as required by 3AAC 110.060 (a). I would consider cutting Kupreanof Island in half a far stretch from following the natural geography. A more logical interpretation of the statute would be to include all of Kupreanof Island. The only probable reason Petersburg did not include all of Kupreanof Island is because in doing so, they would have included the town of Kake.

Kake has let it be known they want no part of a Petersburg borough. If Petersburg had included Kake in their borough plans Petersburg would have had to get many more signatures to start the process. The simplest way to get around that problem was to eliminate Kake and draw the line where they did.

Even so, Petersburg had a very difficult time acquiring the nineteen out of town signatures required for the borough petition. Petersburg resorted to having a borough proponent go door to door in an attempt to coerce people into signing their petition. That “proponent” is now a City Councilor.

Also, it appears Petersburg has not met the requirements of 3AAC 110.060 (6) (c). Which states: “The proposed borough boundaries must conform to existing regional education attendance area boundaries unless...” Kake is within that boundary.

Again in Petersburg’s Supporting Brief, exhibit G (o) they claim to have met the requirements of 3AAC 110.900, “the proposed borough will have the ability to extend services to the area proposed for incorporation in a practical and effective manner.” In 3AAC110.900 (a), Petersburg omitted the word “essential”. Petersburg openly admits that they will provide, “no services beyond taxes, planning, and zoning” outside service area one. I question if this is a satisfactory interpretation of the intent of 3AAC 110.900 (a). I also question if the petition meets the requirements of AS 29.05.031 (a) (3) as well as AAC 110.055.

The projected revenues from all the taxes out side service area 1 will amount to \$332,000 dollars per year as stated from Petersburg petition. The proposed borough area however will be one hundred (100) times larger than the current city of Petersburg. One would think Petersburg would have to add additional staff to administer government over such a large area. That would most likely require a boat in order to govern remote areas and, possibly a crew. That expense alone would eat up any gain taxes. There will be much higher costs to assess all remote properties and many of those properties qualify for a “discount” due to age or military duty deductions.

It just does not seem to add up to being close to a break even unless Petersburg ups the millige rate borough wide. We could then pay even more taxes for more of nothing.

In conclusion, I will make several comments that do not relate directly to “State Statues or law” but are relevant to the borough process and personal and civil rights.

I think Petersburg did a good job forming the original borough committee. That committee was made up of a diverse group, area wide, and city folks. That committee worked very hard, produced a reasonable charter as well as modifications to the petition. Then the City took over the process and things went downhill from there. The city had their own view of what the borough should look like and how it was to be accomplished. The city disregarded much of what the original “borough committee” worked long and hard to accomplish. The city came out with a “hard sell” attitude. They suggested things like, “we need the borough to insure we will continue to have air and ferry service.” This was a statement contained in a city circulated brochure.

I spoke with Alaska Airlines as well as with Alaska Marine Highway and neither knew of any plans to leave Petersburg regardless of their city or borough status. To me, this is being very deceptive.

No one from the city of Petersburg ever came out to our area, or any rural area as far as I know, to ask residents what they would like to see in a borough, or what a borough could or would do for us out here. No one ever asked if we even wanted to be included in the Petersburg borough. Instead Petersburg told us that we will pay property taxes, sales taxes, bed taxes, and within a short time possibly personal property taxes after borough formation. They also told us that for all this expense they will provide planning and zoning...such a deal.

When we objected as well as declined to sign their petition, we became ‘freeloaders’. Yet the city claims in Section 6 “Reasons for Petitioning for Incorporation”...”Borough incorporation will unite the area and it’s residents within a single home rule government that emphasizes individual rights and public participation.”

Article 1 Section 1 of our State Constitution states, “All persons are entitled to equal rights, opportunities, and protection under the laws and that all persons have corresponding obligations to the people and the state.”

There are a number, perhaps 3-5 residents in our immediate area that chose a very simple subsistence life style. They came here because it is away from most people, they live very frugally...some depend on their PFD to carry them thru the year’s supplies. I wonder where these people will go when the “proposed” borough forecloses on them due to lack of property tax payment.

In conclusion, I think the whole Petersburg Borough forming process is unfair.

The state of Alaska required the City of Petersburg to come up with 15% of the registered voters based on the last general election to validate that there was sufficient interest to begin the borough process. The city of Petersburg needed one hundred forty one, (141) signatures from within the city limits as well as nineteen, (19) signatures from the area outside the city. Total signatures required for this petition were one hundred sixty, (160).

Petersburg's total population for the "proposed area for incorporation" is around 3,270 per the 2000 census. I do realize it is required to attain a majority vote come election time. To me it seems 160 out of 3,270 is a very poor representation of the total area population on such an important issue.

Another issue of concern is the fact that the only requirement for petition signers is they are a registered voter within the area to be incorporated. There is no requirement that those voters have ownership of anything, real or personal property ie: taxable property. They have no personal investment at stake, no reason to care. And yet there is no requirement of ownership of anything.

People in our neighborhood, who have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars into their own property, and neighborhood community, as well as the Petersburg coffers...have no say in these matters what so ever. They will be required to shoulder taxes, a huge burden without any services in return. It would seem reasonable for the people that are most impacted, responsible for the liabilities of the "proposed" borough, should at the very least, have a voice in the process.

I respectfully hope that the Local Boundary Commission considers the afore mentioned issues and determines that the proposed Petersburg borough petition does not fulfill the best interests of the residents of the area it will incorporate.

Kenneth W. Howard