From: Kóot Xeech áyá
To: Commission, Boundary (CED sponsored)
Subject: Opposition Letter re: The Xunaa Borough Proposal
Date: Thursday, February 29, 2024 4:56:39 PM

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To: Local Boundary Commission
Subject: The Xunaa Borough Proposal
Date: Feb. 29, 2024

Hello, My name is Koot Xheech, Jasmine Mattson-Wolff. I am Tlingit and lifelong resident of the area known today as “Pelican” and “Lisianski Inlet & Straights”. Generations of my relatives before me were born around Xaay Ta.aan as well, what is now known as Lisianski Inlet & Straights. My family has cared for and thrived in this place since time immemorial.

Pelican is the smallest first class city in Alaska and for my entire life, residents and visitors have been opposing Sitka and Hoonah fighting over who gets Pelican in their borough. Not wanting to be a part of these boroughs does not seem to be getting through to our neighboring communities though, as it keeps coming up. The existing proposal by the City of Hoonah for Incorporation of the Xunaa Borough as a Home Rule Borough is excessive, encroaching on the waters and land residents of Lisianski Inlet, inequitable, and holds favor for the City of Hoonah in their expansion of their Borough. The City of Pelican, City Council Members, and Community have been working on forming a thorough opposition to the Xunaa Borough Proposal, AGAIN. This is not how we hold up our neighbors, there is a clear lack of care and respect in the fact that this proposal has been brought forward (again). I would implore that other options are considered by the City of Hoonah to help grow their community, I am not opposed to Hoonah’s success, however– there is no need to be like colonizers in our behavior. Pelican is its own place; on some maps I’ve seen of traditional Tlingit Territories we are on the “boarder” between Sh’eet Ka Kwaan and Xunaa Khaawu. I’ve always said Sitka, Hoonah, and Pelican feel like home to me and that’s probably why: my ancestors & relatives traveled the coast from season to season.

I am hoping that this will be one of the last times we must defend our community of Pelican and the surrounding areas in this way. I am hoping the many factors contributing to the opposition of this proposal are heard and seriously considered, please hear our voices (again). I would implore exploring other, less harmful, options

in Hoonah wanting to expand its borough. I am going to also include some factors our community has worked on outlining to express the opposition to Pelican, Lisianski Inlet & Straights, Yakobi Island, and Cross Sound, being consumed by the Xunaa Borough as a Home Rule Borough proposal– see those factors below.

Thank you, Gunalcheesh, for your time and consideration.
Please forgive any misspellings as I don't have the correct keyboard downloaded to correctly spell in the Tlingit Language.

In opposition to the Xunna Borough Proposal,

-Koot Xheech
Jasmine Mattson-Wolff
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Additional Factors in opposition to the proposal that are hopefully considered:

As a local resident of Lisianski Inlet, I am opposed to the existing proposal by the City of Hoonah for Incorporation of the Xunaa Borough as a Home Rule Borough. I strongly urge the LBC to consider their own Borough Incorporation Standards when reviewing this petition, as the Xunaa proposal in general, does not.

I strongly oppose the City of Hoonah proposed Xunaa Borough boundary lines. I encourage the LBC to require modifications that limit the boundaries to a more reasonable, acceptable range of territory that does not infringe on the ability of the surrounding communities to support their schools and growth and development.

The boundaries proposed by Hoonah's Xunaa Borough petition greatly exceed the necessary territory to support Hoonah's economic enterprises, tourism, fishing, and timber. No viable services for Pelican or the surrounding area are proposed, and the proposal limits the future growth of the City of Pelican.

Hoonah claims to be a regional hub for the area, which is inaccurate. There are no transportation links; no road, air, or AMHS connections between Pelican and Hoonah. Alaska Seaplanes does not connect Hoonah and Pelican on its service schedule. Hoonah and Pelican are only linked by private tender service for three months during the summer salmon season, which also connect Pelican with Sitka and Juneau. Pelican's regional hub is Juneau, Alaska.

Pelican has several economic potential opportunities for growth and development in the surrounding areas including mining, seafood processing, mariculture development, and private charter business to name a few. None of these areas are reliant on or connected with Hoonah.
The fishing fleet based at Pelican includes both commercial fishing and sportfishing. Yakobi Fisheries, the seafood processor located in Pelican, processes fish harvested in the surrounding areas of Lisianski Inlet/Strait, outer coast Yakobi Island, Cape Cross to Cross Sound, Inian Passages, Alsek River, and often including areas directly around Hoonah. More fishermen fish the Hoonah area and deliver their harvest in Pelican, than vice versa. Thousands of pounds of processed fish are shipped out of Pelican, with limited transit or economic involvement with Hoonah. Pelican is the regional hub for commercial fishing in Cross Sound because of its commercial sized ice machine, bulk fuel facilities, groceries, seafood processing, and its location, "Closest to the Fish".

The City of Pelican has its own Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to handle medical, search and rescue, fire protection, and other emergency services. The City of Hoonah does not provide this service to Pelican residents or residents of the Lisianski Inlet area.

The City of Pelican receives benefits from the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and National Forest Receipts, federal funds; and the State of Alaska Shared Fishery Business Tax Program shares back to municipalities half of the state fisheries business tax collected from fish processors operating outside municipal boundaries. These federal and state revenues provide funding for the City of Pelican and the Pelican City School District. The transfer of federal lands in the Hoonah petition will significantly and negatively affect Pelican's ability to fund its local school district.

The City of Pelican owns the Bohemia Basin public dock in Lisianski Strait on Yakobi Island, which should be excluded from Hoonah's proposed petition.

Regarding utilities; Pelican has no communication links with Hoonah, and does not benefit from Hoonah's telephonic or internet services, nor is there currently any feasible way of connecting the two. Lisianski Inlet and Lisianski Strait have abundant fresh water, with potential water rights, that can be a sustainable economic possibility. Pelican's hydroelectric grid could be expanded to accommodate further development here.

Lisianski Inlet, Lisianski Strait, Stag Bay, and Yakobi Island are important community fish and wildlife subsistence harvest areas for Pelican residents. This includes fishing, hunting, and trapping. The customary and traditional subsistence uses by residents of Pelican for the purposes of meeting is a pattern of use that has more

than a century of use.

Hoonah claims it will not implement a property tax on borough properties. Should Hoonah's Xunaa Borough petition be granted, then the borough government has authority to implement a property tax within its borough boundaries regardless of its original intentions.

The City of Hoonah should find other ways to fund its school district without negatively impacting the City of Pelican and the Pelican City School District by way of analyzing its municipal organization to identify financial resources; namely from the hundreds of cruise ship passengers who visit Hoonah every season.

— END —

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