

Mt. Bether Bible Center
Game Creek Community
P. O. Box 95
Hoonah, AK 99829
February 27, 2023

TO: LOCAL BOUNDARY COMMISSION (LBC)

ATTEN: Jedediah Smith

Email: LBC@alaska.gov

Phone: (907) 269-4559

Dear LBC:

Thank you for taking the time to come to Game Creek to address local hopes and concerns. We have since had many meetings and discussions. This letter addresses the common concerns of the Xunaa Borough.

- 1) Our main point of concern is the exclusion of representation of each community in the charter. We, Game Creek, are a small group with different needs than the City of Hoonah. At first Hoonah guaranteed us a seat on the borough assembly, which would have given us a voice. Now that has changed. We and the other small communities are left without representation that understands our specific needs.
- 2) Game Creek is an agricultural community and would like to reaffirm its desire NOT to be subject to codes, zoning, and the unpopular but nevertheless potential possibility of personal or real property tax. Hoonah currently does not recognize agricultural zoning. The Xunaa Borough is being submitted as a borough without property tax, which will greatly differ from the business models of Juneau, Haines, and Sitka. However, we are mindful that the property tax addressed in the charter is not well-defined and should elaborate, such as: “no property tax, which is defined as real estate, real property, personal and business property.” Though property tax would have to be voted in, there is still possibility that political leverage would make it seem necessary or unavoidable.
- 3) Game Creek Community does not receive power, water, or sewer services from Hoonah. We have received intermediate snow plowing during winter storms and we are grateful, this has been a huge help. It is our hope that the road and bridges could be fully maintained and graded, but there’s no guarantee. In Charter, Sec. 6 “Reasons for the Petition” it states that Game Creek “desires only limited services.” Does Xunaa Borough hope to provide road, water, power, and sewer in the near future, and what are these “limited services”? Further, the “Hoonah Road Crews” do an amazing job but appear already overwhelmed at times. This draws concerns to whether road maintenance guarantees are sustainable or could even be promised.

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- 4) Game Creek Community is concerned about the business model that proposes it can sustain a thriving Xunaa Borough. If tourism becomes the main source of revenue, what will be the alternate source of funding if tourists do not show (covid #2, plan B)? The first draft crafted a form of fish tax that has since been edited and rumored as hard and expensive to control. Also, we do not see a slush fund requirement (savings account minimum) for hard economic times or diversification of funding. The State of Alaska's oil fund is an example of how "guaranteed" revenue could dry up due to market shifts and/or mismanagement, causing reactionary discussions of a "state tax." How will the Xunaa business model be any different? Can it provide a diversified business model for economic fluctuations?
- 5) Game Creek Community would like to see a 5-year plan on strategic economic investments/changes it would like to make that will grow not just Hoonah, but Game Creek Community and possibly the other communities. For example, how would forming a borough be different/impact the existing city? Hoonah's greatest challenges appear to be affordable shipping (AML monopoly), high fuel costs, overreliance on Juneau and AML for goods and services, lack of trade with other island communities, lack of affordable housing, and endless concerns for the school. Would a borough remedy any of these issues?
- 6) Game Creek Community is not directly accessible by road, but by a parking lot with a trail and/or boat on a high tide. It is not clear that the Xunaa Borough would ever commit to delivering EMS medical services, fire support, dock, road, or trail maintenance support if requested. The current dock structures and trail are not easily serviceable and require constant maintenance by community volunteers to ensure passage for goods and services. Since Hoonah is heavily invested in tourism infrastructure, how much more would it support Game Creek Community's infrastructure and services through annexation into a borough?

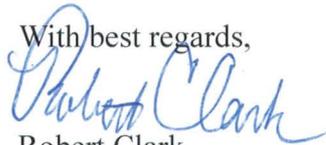
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Each community is unique, and its concerns should be represented in the new “government.” These items are a summation of some of our thoughts and concerns. We are grateful to our neighbors in Hoonah, but like the other communities, we are currently not yet convinced that the “Xunaa Borough” represents our best interests or defines a secure business plan to support larger government.

With best regards,



Robert Clark,
President of Mt. Bether Bible Center