

February 27, 2024

Land Boundary Commission,

We are owners of Tanaku Lodge in Eflin Cove. Elfin Cove is a wonderful place to operate our lodge, and we have developed a strong bond with the community. I oppose the proposed Hoonah incorporation and creation of the Xunna Borough.

As a member of the Board of Directors of the Community of Elfin Cove, we have been actively engaged in governing the community. This is a community with shared values, working together to find solutions for our community challenges. We have been very successful in establishing, developing and maintaining all the services necessary to support rich social, economic and family life. Hoonah has never played a role in our daily activities. Everything we need, including transportation, supplies, medical and emergency care, come from Juneau or Gustavus. We have never looked to, or relied upon, Hoonah for these services. In fact, some residents of Hoonah are a bit hostile toward residents of Elfin Cove.

One big problem is carving out Pelican and Gustavus from the Borough. First, it creates two “enclaves”, which should not happen, and second, it removes from the Borough two vibrant communities. We have far more in common, and do more, with Pelican and Gustavus than Hoonah. Both Pelican and Gustavus are closer to Elfin Cove, and we have a history of working with both communities. That can’t be said for Hoonah.

In its Petition, Hoonah makes the claim that they will bring local government to Elfin Cove, who “currently has no local government at all.” This is a highly offensive claim, and clearly shows that the leaders of Hoonah don’t know Elfin Cove at all. Elfin Cove leaders have done an excellent job providing for the needs of the community. Shifting governmental decision-making and accountability to Hoonah would be a disaster for Elfin Cove, and our business.

Hoonah makes the claim that they are the “transportation hub” of the region. Nothing could be further from the truth. The only way to get to Hoonah is to first travel to Juneau, and then fly or take the ferry, unless of course you want to try to brave the 5-hour boat ride in our private boats. If we were going for supplies, why would we travel to Juneau, and then to Hoonah, when we could just get them in Juneau? In their petition, Hoonah openly admits in their petition that the

only ferry service is between Hoonah and Juneau, and only twice weekly during the summer months.

These transportation challenges make participation in government very difficult for Elfin Cove residents. The ability to attend borough meetings would be challenging, and impossible in the winter months. This isn't fair to Elfin Cove residents, who have a right to participate in local government. Communication with Elfin Cove is so difficult for Hoonah that they weren't even able to post the "Public Notice for Filing the Petition" in Elfin Cove. It looks like Elfin Cove is just too hard to reach to justify posting the required notice.

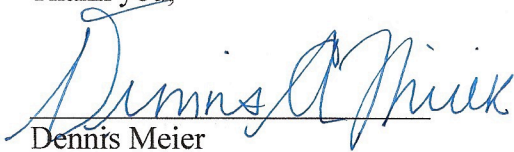
Hoonah is also very proud of the infrastructure they have installed for tourism and cruise ships. However, none of that expense benefits Elfin Cove at all. And of course, if tourism drops, Hoonah will be looking to raise money to pay for all this expensive infrastructure, meaning more taxes for the Borough, with zero benefit for Elfin Cove. Hoonah also emphasizes a wheeled aircraft-capable airport. Unfortunately, there isn't a community in the proposed borough that has a runway. All plane access is by float plane. And since there are nearly daily float plane flights between Juneau and Elfin Cove, we have steady access to delivery of customers, supplies, etc.

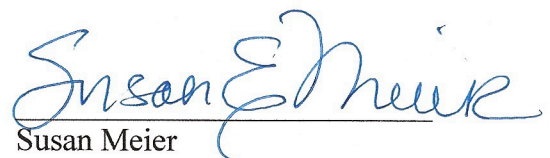
We are very opposed to the proposed 1% sales tax. It can be a struggle running a lodge in Southeast Alaska, especially with inflation and the high price of fuel. And Hoonah openly admits that the money raised by this sales tax will remain in the Hoonah townsite. The transition repeatedly states that there is no plan to extend additional services to those of us outside Hoonah. Elfin Cove will remain solely responsible for paying all of the cost of infrastructure, maintenance and services within the cove. Nothing about Hoonah's economy is interrelated with Elfin Cove.

There are lots of unanswered financial questions regarding the proposed Hoonah Borough. First, Hoonah school expenses do not appear in their budget. How is that paid for? More taxes? And since Elfin Cove doesn't have school-age children, this is more taxation with no benefit. Second, how will Elfin Cove's community buildings be maintained, including the Generator and electric transmission lines, the water system and sewer system? Hoonah expressly states they won't take over those services. Third, commercial fishing. One of the key economic drivers for Elfin Cove is our commercial fleet. Does Hoonah plan to try to tax them, even though they don't provide any services for the commercial fleet? If so this could be very damaging to the economy of Elfin Cove.

Running a successful business in Southeast Alaska can be very challenging. Weather, the economy, rising fuel costs, increasing competition, etc can be very harmful to our business. Adding another layer of government, and more taxes, from a community we have never been involved with makes no sense and could jeopardize our way of life. We ask that the LBC reject the Hoonah Petition.

Thank you,

  
Dennis Meier

  
Susan Meier