

February 29, 2024

Dear Local Boundary Commission,

The proposed Xunaa Borough petition is problematic and absolutely not in the best interest of the State of Alaska. What are the problems?

- 1) Creating 3 small enclaves with no adjacent land creates a Hyder/Ketchikan situation X3 which is already a problem for the State. Why create this again?
- 2) The current borough is set up for borough assembly members to be voted in “at large” meaning that if Gustavus, Tenakee Springs, and Pelican ever considered being a part of the proposed borough we would never have representation as Hoonah’s population would trump ours at every election.
- 3) The current borough petition intends for the City of Hoonah to dissolve and the Xunaa Borough to exist. If the other three communities ever considered being a part of this borough how would our cities fit in to this political structure?
- 4) The current borough boundaries would result in taking large portions of the PILT and USFS Timber Sales Receipts dollars from the smallest towns in the area and redistributing them to the larger town, Hoonah, creating a hardship that would surely result in us requesting other revenue sources from the State.

I understand that it is in the best interest of the State of Alaska for the Unorganized Borough to boroughize. It has been talked about for decades and with the State in financial trouble it makes sense. I suggest that if you allow this borough to form as petitioned it runs against this mandate. As the petition stands now, it is a huge disincentive for the rest of us to ever become part of this borough OR form a borough of our own.

What would incentivize us would be:

- 1) Leave lots of land around Gustavus, Pelican, Tenakee Springs and Elfin Cove in a contiguous block so we would have a tax base to fund a borough of our own in the future.
- 2) Don’t back the 4 communities into a corner bordered on all sides by boroughs that we would have no interest in ever being a part of.

With all due respect, Hoonah appears to be more than financially solvent, and I question their need for the more than 10,000 square miles that are within the proposed borough boundary. As Hoonah attests in their petition, “Hoonah is a prosperous community with more than adequate resources to support the new borough. Indeed, it was named 2022 Community of the Year by the Southeast Conference, because of its economic vitality and outlook”. This seems to be true in spades as we watch from across Icy Strait. And with the huge partnerships Huna Totem is embarking on with Doyon, Chukka Caribbean, Norwegian Cruise Line and Alaska Coach Tours, there is more development and tax dollars on those developments to be had close to home.

It seems to me the very simple solution is to let Hoonah boroughize and just reduce the boundaries drastically. I suggest you do not lose the only bargaining chip you have to encourage the 4 other communities of the 5 in the Glacier Bay Model Borough to join a borough by awarding ALL of the land within that model boundary to only 1 of the 5 communities. If these boundaries are allowed, I do not see a future where the excluded communities would ever be interested in forming a borough of their own OR joining the borough that surrounds them, making us wards of the State into the future. This would be a huge disservice to the State and the taxpayers. I suggest the LBC considers a Xunaa Borough boundary on the order of that suggested by the Gustavus Visitors Association or similar.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kathy Streveler

Gustavus resident of 58 years