

I'm a Gustavus resident who believes that Hoonah's proposed Borough is a bad idea that fails to meet your standards for Borough formation. One of those core standards is that the Borough be regionally appropriate. By excising Gustavus, Pelican, and Tenakee Springs from its boundaries and then trying to grab all their surrounding lands however, the proposed Borough immediately throws the idea of any kind of effective regional governance out the window. In many ways Hoonah is effectively proposing a city government that covers a much, much larger area. Painfully, it tries to do this at the expense of all other regional communities.

Hoonah is absolutely correct in noting its economic vitality. But given this, given the substantial revenues the city garners from the cruise ship and tourist industry, likely to increase in coming years, why create a borough whose selections squeeze our surrounding communities so tightly? The answer is clear from their petition—to recreate the Tlingit homeland. While I and many Gustavus residents are mindful and respectful of Tlingit's profound historical connections to Glacier Bay and Icy Strait, for better and worse we live here too, we are part of a community that has existed for well over a century, and we are not going away any time soon. Any genuine regional government cannot ignore that reality or attempt to flatten us. The Hoonah petition states that it gives our towns "the greatest flexibility to chart their municipal futures." By strangling us? This disingenuous claim may explain why their petition fails to analyze the economic impacts on Tenakee Springs, Pelican, and Gustavus. As others have noted, these impacts may well be considerable. Hamstringing 4 communities for the sake of one does not seem in the state's best interests.

Additionally, Gustavus is the fastest growing community in Southeast Alaska, having grown 48% from 2010-2020, from 442 to 665. (During that time, Hoonah has grown 23%, from 760-931.) ["Alaska 2020 Census Data for Redistricting - Cities and CDPs.xls"](#).

Again, a new borough shouldn't compromise our future. I'm told the way the boundaries are drawn do not technically make Gustavus, Pelican, or Tenakee Inlet "enclaves". But effectively they do, eliminating our future abilities to form a regional borough.

To try and satisfy the regional criterion, Hoonah's petition goes to considerable lengths to define itself as a regional hub. This is silly. The ferry stops for a few minutes in Hoonah coming and going to Gustavus, but there are no easy connections between us, little to draw Gustavus residents there. Juneau is our regional hub, where we go for the things we can't get or do here. To fly to Hoonah, one must go through Juneau. Despite a desire to visit Hoonah, excepting those brief ferry layovers, during my 12 years as a full time Gustavus resident, I have spent time in Hoonah once.

And though this pains some Hoonah residents, understandably so, Gustavus is the epicenter for activities in Glacier Bay National Park. Except for cruise ships stopping at Icy Point on their way to or from the park, pretty much all commercial and tourist activities related to the park are centered in Gustavus. Park facilities are located within our city boundaries, the airport and ferry terminal tourists use to access the park are here, park related tourism and NPS employees who live here are our economic backbone, the park is tied into our electric grid, etc. Many of the justifications in the petition focus on what was, not what is. It makes me uncomfortable as a

newcomer to say this, but it makes little sense given today's realities to include park lands in the proposed Borough's boundaries, the attempt to do so a central example of how the proposed borough impinges on other communities.

Their proposal does have a solid rationale for excluding other communities the way it did. The reason for Hoonah's economic strength also highlights the significant differences between us. Huna Totem logged most of its ANCSA lands and built the infrastructure to welcome the cruise ship industry with open arms. Gustavus borders a national park; many of our residents worked hard to permanently protect additional lands on our coastal boundary (now owned by the Nature Conservancy) and to establish the 4000 acre Critical Habitat Area; the city intentionally built our ferry dock so that cruise ships could not use it. In many ways we do not share a commonality of social, cultural, or economic characteristics. Tenakee, Pelican and Elfin Cove are in a similar position. That is why an all-inclusive borough is an unnatural fit for our region at this time. But while Hoonah has a reasonable rationale for excluding us, it has no sound reason for trying to grab so much land that it screws us in the process. Again, where is the regional perspective?

For all of these reasons, I believe the petition is deeply flawed and should be rejected by the LBC. Something that impinges heavily upon all the surrounding communities is harmful to our region, and by extension, not in the best interests of the state.

Hoonah did an execrable job of outreach in this matter. A proposal of this magnitude, ostensibly seeking a path towards regional government, should involve far more than a letter to our mayor. At the least, Hoonah should have sent a delegation to Gustavus and other communities to discuss the pro and cons of borough formation. And that is where I suggest the LBC leave the matter. Our current system of independent municipalities suits our region best at this time, this proposal a disservice. Any proposal seeking a regional form of government should come through a process involving the consultation and collaboration of all our communities—that will serve the best long term interests of our region and the State.

If the LBC does decide to approve the petition, at the very least the borough boundaries should be drastically reduced, excluding Glacier Bay National Park, at least half of Icy Strait, as well as other areas on Chichagof Island of significance to Pelican, Tenakee Springs and Elfin Cove, and the Fairweather fishing grounds.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,

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