

**Commission, Boundary (CED sponsored)**

**From:** Dana [rdthynes@gci.net]  
**To:** Commission, Boundary (CED sponsored)  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** Public Comment on the Petersburg Borough Petition referencing 3 AAC 110.045 (a)(3) and (c)(2)  
**Attachments:**

----- Original Message -----

**From:** [Dana](#)  
**To:** [brent.williams@alaska.gov](mailto:brent.williams@alaska.gov)  
**Sent:** Sunday, October 23, 2011 11:40 PM  
**Subject:** Public Comment on the Petersburg Borough Petition referencing 3 AAC 110.045 (a)(3) and (c)(2)

Brent Williams  
 Division of Community & Regional Affairs  
 Department of Community, Commerce, and Economic Development  
 550 West 7th Avenue  
 Suite 1770  
 Anchorage, AK 99501-3510

Dear Mr. Williams and staff members of the Local Boundary Commission,

In this comment, I would like to focus on 3 AAC 110.045 (a)(3) and (c)(2):

3 AAC 110.045. Relationship of interests

(a) On a regional scale suitable for borough government, the social, cultural, and economic characteristics and activities of the people in a proposed borough must be interrelated and integrated in accordance with AS 29.05.031 (a)(1) and art. X, sec. 3, Constitution of the State of Alaska. In this regard, the commission may consider relevant factors, including the

(3) existence throughout the proposed borough of customary and simple transportation and communication patterns;

(c) The communications media and the land, water, and air transportation facilities throughout the proposed borough must allow for the level of communications and exchange necessary to develop an integrated borough government in accordance with AS 29.05.031 (a)(4) and art. X, sec. 3, Constitution of the State of Alaska. In this regard, the commission may consider relevant factors, including

(2) geographical and climatic impediments;

**MY COMMENT:**

People "on the outside" must provide their own transportation across large and frequently dangerous bodies of water. Their transportation is, in most cases, a small open skiff with an outboard motor. Unlike public meetings in roaded areas, the attendants may just not be able to make an appearance, due to weather conditions. Witness the local meeting down at Keene Channel on Kupreanof Island on September 18, 2011 to hear a presentation by Brent Williams regarding borough formation: five people from Kake had made plans to attend, but failed to show, because their charter pilot cancelled due to high wind warnings. The option of coming in the ferry from Kake to Petersburg would have entailed an extra 2 - 3 days, and great expense in meals and lodging.

In order to attend events at night, off-grid dwellers must ensure that their homes are prepared for a freeze, in case they don't make it back that night. Outboard motors are famously unreliable. Without electricity, heat tape on water pipes is not an option. Frozen pipes aren't the worst that can happen -- a frozen waterline is the greatest danger, because that condition may not be remedied until the spring thaw.

What if they don't make it back home, because the weather turns nasty or the outboard quits? If they are

"lucky," they will be close enough to town to find a place to "hole up" for the night. If they have no family or close friends in town, that means a night at the hotel. This is an option some people cannot afford more than once or twice, if that.

Winter council meetings in Petersburg are generally held during times when weather conditions are harmful to machinery such as outboard motors, which cannot operate reliably in freezing temperatures. It would be foolhardy to conduct one's life in such a way that you were continually placing yourself and your family in danger in order to attend public meetings.

Of all the off-road communities encompassed in this borough petition, the City of Kupreanof has the smallest body of water to cross to reach Petersburg. Yet even here, we often face fog, driving rain, possible collision with other boats on the water or unlit channel markers in pitch black darkness (for which the Coast Guard claims no responsibility beyond leaving a message on the radio), and freezing weather when crossing to go home. There is undeniable risk.

In the past seven years, two residents of the City of Kupreanof have drowned or died as a result of crossing the water at night in winter. One was found, drowned, on the beach close to her residence. The other, in a separate incident, never was found, but his unmoored boat was discovered floating by itself.

These tragedies remind rural dwellers of the dangers inherent in their way of life. It would be unfair to subject them to government by others, when they have not asked for it. They cannot represent themselves in a borough assembly unless they continually place themselves in harm's way by attending meetings at night, in the cold and dark.

Thank you,

Dana Thynes  
City of Kupreanof  
Kupreanof Island