
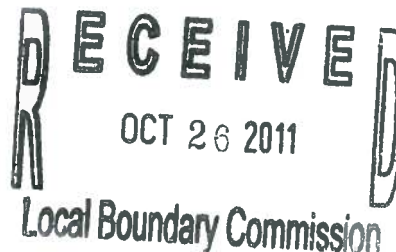
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Commission, Boundary (CED sponsored)

From: Emily Thynes [emilythynes@gmail.com] **Sent:** Wed 10/26/2011 2:55 PM
To: Williams, Brent R (CED); Commission, Boundary (CED sponsored)
Cc:
Subject: Public Comment on Petersburg Borough Petition
Attachments:  [Comments to LBC\[2\].docx\(25KB\)](#)

Please find attached my comment on the Petersburg Borough Petition.
Thank you,
Emily Thynes
emilythynes@gmail.com



October 26, 2011

Local Boundary Commission
Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development
550 West Seventh Avenue, Suite 1770
Anchorage, AK 99504

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to the formation of the proposed Petersburg Borough. The proposed borough fails to meet the criteria for formation outlined in the Alaska Statutes, would not deliver the benefits promised, and is highly objectionable to those areas which would be forcibly annexed through the formation.

3 AAC 110.160 outlines the relationship of interests desirable in a borough as conceived by the drafters of our State Constitution. The two sides of this issue are incompatible in the following ways:

- In lifestyle. The residents of Petersburg predominantly live an urban lifestyle, relying on the proximity of city conveniences, while the “outlanders” are highly self-sufficient and may not necessarily take advantage of community resources, often traveling to other communities such as Wrangell, Kake, or even Juneau.
- In economic lifestyles and commercial activities. The residents of the outlying areas proposed for annexation tend to fall into a distinct economic class, being mostly retired, self-employed, or engaged in transient industries such as fishing, which require little service of any kind from the City of Petersburg. To the extent that they are engaged in business through the City of Petersburg, they pay sales tax, licensing fees, harbor fees, utilities and garbage fees, and property tax like everyone else, as well as bringing a tremendous amount of money to Petersburg businesses.
- In the availability of transportation and communications infrastructure. Residents of outlying areas are responsible for their own transportation by boat, often in extremely harsh and dangerous weather conditions, to and from Petersburg, and often have no capability for phone or internet service. Often, short radio messages are relied on as the best way to get ahold of somebody down the Narrows.

Article Ten of the Alaska State Constitution clearly states that the interests of a borough’s disparate areas should be as much in accord as possible, and that the entire purpose of forming a borough is to provide the best, most representative, and least redundant local governance

possible. It is abundantly clear to the residents of the areas surrounding Petersburg that the City has no interest whatsoever in protecting their interests (as evidenced by the shameful neglect to deliver on promises to provide basic municipal services such as utilities, electricity, emergency services, and a road to the Frederick Point area, which was forcibly annexed and has since been taxed at the full mill rate for 19 years) in listening to their voices, or in making it possible for them to actually participate in a borough government in any meaningful way, since most of the outlanders would not even have the ability to attend council meetings due to the difficulties of traveling to and from town. Petersburg proposes to tax residents of outlying areas at the full mill rate in return for the lone and dubious service of being taxed for schools their children do not attend, roads already paid through State funds, utilities they do not receive, firetrucks and ambulances that cannot come to their aid, and community services they do not use or already support through their generous patronage. Petersburg has proven itself to be an extraordinarily poor steward of public interests and monies, choosing to add City staff, increase the pay and benefits of existing staff, refresh its perfectly good vehicle fleet with state-of-the-art models, build a new firehall, build a new public swimming pool, pay an out-of-state “expert” \$58,000 to come up with a Petersburg brand to help sell the town’s image, and take out bonds for a new library and community center, all during a struggling economy, with withering local industries and a shrinking city population. The City seems to believe that, if they build enough nice things, people will come and invest in the community and live here. The reality is that borough formation will simply add an additional layer of bureaucracy to the existing system, incurring further expenses which will undoubtedly be passed on to borough residents and also the State.

Far from presenting “a unified voice” to outside interests as Petersburg claims it would, a borough would silence the voices of other areas who wish to have a say in the use of lands and destroy opportunities for ordinary people to live and work. When my family moved back to Alaska in 1993, moving to Kupreanof was the only way we could afford to come back to where our relatives lived. My parents worked very hard to make the place livable and to make the final payment on the property. It is unconscionable that, after 18 years of uprooting stumps, fixing broken water dams, and making the payments to own the house outright, the City of Petersburg should now believe it would have the right to foreclose on my parent’s property if they were ever unable to pay property taxes. As the future inheritor of this property on Kupreanof, I know that my future and my decision of whether or not to move back someday will undoubtedly be affected by whether or not the borough is formed.

Sincerely,

Emily Thynes
16 Year Kupreanof Resident