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www.Girdwood.US

Letter to Editor

There have been recent statements about the Girdwood Governance Association (GGA) from various sources, and some are inaccurate. GGA is an organization established by local citizens with a mission statement: to explore, identify and if feasible, advance a viable plan to maximize self-governance for the Girdwood Community. Girdwood is part of the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), yet we only have one percent of the city's population. We are a mountain resort community, which is very different in character and challenges of urban Anchorage. Given the Muni's many issues, it is difficult for its leadership to direct attention to Girdwood.

A prime example was the inability of Anchorage Police Department, operating under an urban policing model, to take over law enforcement in Girdwood after Alaska State Troopers withdrew from their Girdwood post. However, we were able to find a satisfactory solution by working with the City of Whittier, an independent, small community. Despite the good efforts by Girdwood Board of Supervisors, MOA has ultimate control over all aspects of Girdwood including housing, education, utilities, animal enforcement, land use and more.

We understand the MOA has brought infrastructure, services and benefits to Girdwood, as well as the Anchorage School District. Girdwood pays handsomely for what it receives from MOA. GGA is advancing an independent study to compare the property taxes, hotel/B&B occupancy charges and other fees generated by Girdwood with the cost of MOA services delivered in Girdwood.

Could these monies generated by Girdwood, exceed the value we receive? Could local taxes remain in Girdwood and run a more effective, locally controlled, mountain community?

We owe it to ourselves to evaluate these questions and discuss the best long-term governance options for Girdwood. To this end, GGA has been raising money for a third-party study to define possibilities, pro and con. The study evaluates the revenues and costs to get a clear picture if there are financial means to form an independent community.

As part of this exercise, one consideration is whether we can form a new borough. The State has advised us the best way for Girdwood to become an independent city is to be part of a new borough set up to maximize city powers.

A separate Borough could involve alignment with Whittier, possibly other parts of Turnagain Arm, and several communities in Prince William Sound including Cordova. We already do business with Whittier and Cordova and have much in common with communities along Alaska's North Gulf Coast.

Determining facts and defining the possibilities is the responsible action to take. If third-party analysis finds a viable proposition, the community can further explore the possibility of a new borough and city independence. If not, we can move on knowing we have researched the questions thoroughly.

Armed with solid information, our next steps then should be to establish a more favorable position with MOA and work harder to request and be granted what we need in our community. We welcome input and encourage people to help. Please see our website girdwood.us.

Girdwood Governance Association