

Meyers Chuck Community Association

P.O. Box 99
Meyers Chuck, Alaska 99903
Phone (907) 946-8318
Phone (907) 946-8308

September 18, 2007

Local Boundary Commission Staff
Attention: Kathy Atkinson
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
550 West Seventh Avenue, Suite 1770
Anchorage, AK 99501

Re: Response to the Preliminary Report Regarding the Home-Rule Petition for Wrangell

Dear Members of the Local Boundary Commission and Staff,

On behalf of the Meyers Chuck Community Association, we submit the attached response to the Local Boundary Commission Staff "Preliminary Report to the LBC Regarding the Petition to Incorporate the Unified Home-Rule Borough of Wrangell".

Sincerely,



Glen G. Rice
Chairman
Meyers Chuck Community Association

Attachment

Cc: Governor Sarah Palin
Robert P. Blasco - Attorney for the Meyers Chuck Community Association
City of Wrangell

RECEIVED
SEP 24 2007
Local Boundary Commission

IN THE MATTER OF THE CITY OF WRANGELL PETITION TO INCORPORATE
THE UNIFIED HOME-RULE BOROUGH OF WRANGELL

COMMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE MEYERS CHUCK COMMUNITY
ASSOCIATION IN RESPONSE TO THE PRELIMINARY REPORT TO THE LOCAL
BOUNDARY COMMISSION REGARDING THE PETITION TO INCORPORATE
THE UNIFIED HOME-RULE BOROUGH OF WRANGELL

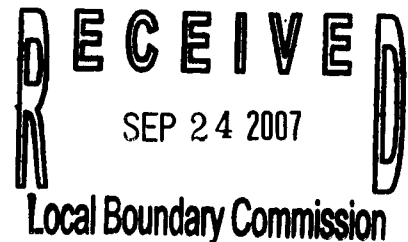
DATED

9/18/07



Glen Rice
Chairman of the Meyers Chuck
Community Association

Cc: Governor Sarah Palin
Robert P. Blasco, Attorney for the Meyers Chuck Community Assn.
City of Wrangell.



The Wrangell Petition for a Home-Rule Borough includes the area around Meyers Chuck, Union Bay, and Three Islands – approximately 191 square miles. This same area is proposed for inclusion in an expanded Ketchikan Borough. It is currently in, and contiguous with, the unincorporated borough. Meyers Chuck/Union Bay did not initiate either petition. Wrangell was concerned that without Meyers Chuck their petition might fail the “two community” standard and Ketchikan felt a need to partially address the Local Boundary Commission’s (LBC) concerns with an earlier petition they submitted. Responding to Meyers Chuck/Union Bay residents desire to remain in our current status within the unorganized borough, both Wrangell and Ketchikan have taken official actions stating that they do not oppose Meyers Chuck/Union Bay being removed from their respective petitions.

Despite the Meyers Chuck/Union Bay requests and agreements with both Petitioners to leave us out of their respective boroughs, the DCCED staff considers Meyers Chuck/Union Bay’s immediate future as “either/or” in terms of needing to join either Ketchikan or Wrangell. As Wrangell’s Mayor Bill Privett stated at last week’s public meeting, there is a third choice. Meyers Chuck/Union Bay should remain in the unorganized borough, and at some future date, join an organized borough – possibly Thorne Bay/Prince of Wales. Until some future action is taken to modify the model boundaries, Meyers Chuck/Union Bay will remain, as it is today, an enclave within the Ketchikan model borough.

The Alaska State Constitution divides the state into two types of boroughs, organized and unorganized. They have equal legitimacy under the Constitution. The Constitution requires that any borough shall embrace an area and population with common interest to the maximum degree possible. In order to recommend that a community be removed from its borough (organized or unorganized) the analysis must look at the ties and common interests it shares with its current affiliation. The DCCED has failed to do this in its preliminary reports on either the Wrangell or Ketchikan petition.

The residents of Meyers Chuck/Union Bay do not live our lives, conduct our business, or establish our social, cultural and economic ties based on the geography of the land. There are no roads to connect us. We are totally dependant upon the air and the sea. This is our link to each other and our neighboring communities. Anyone who has even the slightest familiarity with our community realizes our closest and strongest link is with Prince of Wales through the community of Thorne Bay. It is only 12 miles away, and we can reach it under most weather conditions using small boats that are the only form of transportation we have in this community. Thorne Bay is our polling place. It is our source for supplies, fuel and groceries. It is our seaplane service connection. It provides our weekly newspaper, the Island News (see attachment). It is our barge/freight terminal. Through it we access Craig, the service center for our local telephone. It links us to our closest access to medical and emergency services. Throughout the spring and summer, the charter fishing fleet from Thorne Bay regularly fishes along Meyers Chuck and Union Bay shorelines. The list goes on. Residents and visitors occasionally use the Thorne Bay seaplane service route to access Meyers Chuck. The majority of passengers are not destined for Ketchikan, but rather in transit through the Ketchikan airport. The airfreight

we receive through Ketchikan is primarily via the U.S. postal service and its weekly-chartered flight. The U.S. post office services most of southern southeast Alaska communities through Ketchikan, including Hyder, which receives delivery twice per week.

The geo-political boundaries the DCCED has used to justify its recommendation to remove Meyers Chuck/Union Bay from the unorganized borough are artificial (census tract, fish and game management area, election district, etc.). They do not measure “common interest” since they do not reflect how we live our lives, our transportation patterns, or our social, cultural and economic characteristics. They are inappropriate to use as the primary measuring stick for determining if the constitutional requirement of “embracing an area of common interest” has been met. The LBC concluded in its 2002 decision to form a Skagway borough that election districts do not make ideal borough boundaries. It is the LBC’s view that contiguousness and socio economic integration take priority. We request that Chapter 2, part 3 of DCCED preliminary report and the conclusions and recommendation drawn from it be rewritten to reflect Meyers Chuck/Union Bay’s shared common interests with the unorganized borough.

The LBC is entrusted to be a forward-looking commission and to make decisions that will be appropriate in the future. As such, it must be realized that there have been many changes in the 45 years since the legislature drew boundaries that were subsequently adopted by the LBC. New ferry service and paved roads now link Prince of Wales communities to the other major population centers in southern southeast Alaska. The Prince of Wales communities are diversifying and the services and amenities available are diversifying and growing as well. To ignore the impact this will have on this part of Alaska as well as the existing and growing interdependency with Meyers Chuck/Union Bay is a mistake. Reliance on historic conditions instead of contemporary ones is hardly appropriate for a forward-looking commission.

It is hard to imagine how either Wrangell, or especially Ketchikan, could provide any public service to Meyers Chuck. The distance for public employees to travel and perform duties here is great. The weather and sea conditions very frequently limit travel. There are no facilities to accommodate public employees (office, restrooms, phone, internet connection, overnight accommodations). The land in the community is privately owned. There are no roads and even the foot trails are all on private property. Many properties are accessible only by water, and there is no boat charter service to transport public employees if they arrive by air. We have no electronic media or public teleconferencing facilities to afford access to public meetings and actual attendance at meetings in Wrangell (or Ketchikan) is expensive and difficult. Even Wrangell decided it was cost prohibitive to provide transportation for Meyers Chuck/Union Bay residents to attend the public informational meeting held by the DCCED on this petition.

We support Wrangell in its quest to form a borough. We appreciate their consideration to include Meyers Chuck in their petition in recognition that Ketchikan is definitely not an appropriate fit for our community. We request that this report be amended to delete the “either/or” comparison between Wrangell and Ketchikan in terms of which has more in

common with Meyers Chuck. This comparison is meaningless and unnecessary. It unfortunately entwines the Wrangell petition in the conflict of interest problem that has arisen as a result of Dan Bockhorst's (DCCED staff) desire to become the Ketchikan Gateway Borough manager and jeopardizes formation of the Wrangell borough in a timely manner. The analysis contained in this report should be a comparison between our ties to Wrangell and the unorganized borough. If the staff finds Meyers Chuck has stronger ties to the unincorporated borough and therefore should be excluded from a Wrangell borough – so be it. The recommendation should then be that we remain in the unincorporated borough.

50¢
Copy

SOUTHEAST ALASKA'S



September 3, 2007

Volume 26, Number 35

Cape Pole • Coffman Cove • Craig • Edna Bay • Hollis • Hydaburg • Hyder • Kasaan • Klawock • Meyers
Chuck • Naukati • Point Baker • Port Protection • Saltery Cove • Thorne Bay • Waterfall • Whale Pass