

Subject: Ketchikan Gateway Borough annexation plan
From: Sheila and Shawn <matilda@kpunet.net>
Date: Tue, 25 Apr 2006 20:05:07 -0800
To: lbc@commerce.state.ak.us

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a property owner, both within the current Ketchikan Gateway Borough (KGB) boundaries and in Meyer's Chuck, which is included in the borough's annexation plan. I am opposed to KGB's plan to annex Meyer's Chuck. There are many reasons that I am against this annexation proposal. I would prefer, of course, to not be annexed at all, but I also recognize it is the intention of the state to have all unincorporated areas eventually organized into boroughs. With this in mind, it would be preferable for Meyers Chuck to be annexed into a Wrangell borough. Not one person in Meyer's Chuck has come forward in support of being annexed by Ketchikan. There are a few of us who live in both places and although we fully support paying taxes in the borough and benefitting from the services the borough provides, we do not approve of the politics and poor management and fiscal decisions that has come to define the actions of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough council. It also seems as if the Borough really has no interest in working to meet the concerns and needs of the residents of Meyer's Chuck. The KGB has said that the mill rate charged for folks in remote properties would be the same as for those located on the Ketchikan road system. This is inherently unfair to expect folks who don't really use the services of Ketchikan to be expected to support road repairs, schools, etc. We were told that we would receive limited services, including "zoning and planning". No one really cares whether there is any zoning.

With that in mind, most folks in Meyer's Chuck feel that Wrangell is a better fit in terms of lifestyle and community. The community of Wrangell has committed to offering the lowest mill rate required by the state (4 mills) on remote properties. Thus far, Ketchikan borough has not offered to have any kind of reduced mill rate. The Ketchikan borough also added the areawide library tax even though Meyers Chuck residents in general do not use the service and they haven't offered any other services that anyone would use. So property owners off the current road system would be assessed the same mill rate, but would not be receiving many of the services that folks on the road system in Ketchikan receive.

At the end of January, the Ketchikan Gateway Borough held a public meeting on the matter of annexation. The meeting went on for 4 hours and only 1 person in that time spoke in favor of annexing. I felt his reasoning was flawed. He said that if the borough had successfully annexed Cleveland Peninsula, Meyer's Chuck and Hyder in 1998, that perhaps the borough could have gotten more involved with the Forest Service's planning of timber sales and therefore may have prevented Seeley's Mill from closing for the short time it closed this spring. In my 10 years time in Planning at the Forest Service, I have yet to see the borough get overly involved in any planned timber sale, all of which have occurred within the current borough boundaries. The borough does claim that it will make some revenue through taxing properties within the expanded borough boundaries, although there will be a significant cost to get that started as all property values will need to be assessed.

The communities of Wrangell, Hydaburg, Thorne Bay, Klawock, and Craig have come forward officially opposing this move as it will mean less money from timber sale receipts for those communities, as Ketchikan will receive a bigger percentage through annexing more land.

At the January meeting, the borough decided to have a public vote on the proposal to annex. People speaking at the meeting had asked that a vote be taken to the people. At the time it seemed like the borough was truly listening. At the very next meeting, they rescinded the decision to have a vote as it would delay the annexation process for up to a year.

I understand that the city of Wrangell has or will be soon submitting an annexation plan to the Local Boundary Commission. I hope that the Local Boundary commission can consider the comments of the remote property owners and ensure that these remote properties are annexed by a city or borough that best fits their needs in keeping with the lifestyle. In the case of Meyer's Chuck, that would be Wrangell or Thorne Bay. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Sheila Spores

