

**From:** [Turner, Michele](#)  
**To:** [Ward, Tamera](#)  
**Subject:** FW: <EXTERNAL-SENDER>Cooper Landing Emergency Services  
**Date:** Thursday, July 6, 2023 8:57:30 AM

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Public Comment Ordinance 2023-16

Michele Turner, CMC  
Acting Borough Clerk  
Kenai Peninsula Borough  
(907) 714-2162 direct

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

From: David Story <davidgrantstory@gmail.com>  
Sent: Wednesday, July 5, 2023 8:50 PM  
To: Mayor Peter Micciche <pmicciche@kpb.us>; Ecklund, Cindy <CEcklund@kpb.us>; G\_Notify\_AssemblyClerk <G\_Notify\_AssemblyClerk@kpb.us>  
Subject: <EXTERNAL-SENDER>Cooper Landing Emergency Services

Assembly Member Ecklund,

We are writing to express our support for Option 3 as presented in the Mayor's Report to the Assembly June 12, 2023 and at the June 28th public meeting held in Cooper Landing on the necessity of proposed Cooper Landing Emergency Service Area Boundary.

Stability in funding for these services is essential. The needs going unmet using the existing system of pay as you go fundraisers and suggested donations demonstrates that this model is unsustainable and that Option 1 is no longer viable.

Option 2 places an untenable financial burden on the small number of taxable residents of Cooper Landing in order to cover the costs of emergency services provided to the public at large including those simply passing through on federal and state roads, those accessing the surrounding federal lands and facilities, state lands, and waters or borough roads and lands. Option 2 is imbalanced.

Establishing a broader service area that can distribute the financial load of servicing a corridor that is important to all Kenai Peninsula residents and visitors across a broader base of taxpayers seems to us to be the most reasonable path forward. There is growing evidence that the connection of emergency response resources across the peninsula leads to better service and more efficiencies which, in our opinion, makes Option 3 an opportunity worth pursuing.

Thank you for your consideration and for your work to improve our emergency services infrastructure.

Sincerely,  
David and Martha Story  
Cooper Landing

**From:** [Turner, Michele](#)  
**To:** [Ward, Tamera](#)  
**Subject:** FW: <EXTERNAL-SENDER>OPPOSITION TO ORDINANCE 2023-16  
**Date:** Monday, July 10, 2023 8:45:46 AM  
**Attachments:** [Riley's letter with notations.pdf](#)

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## Public Comment Ordinance 2023-16

Michele Turner, CMC  
Acting Borough Clerk  
Kenai Peninsula Borough  
(907) 714-2162 direct

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**From:** Vince Beltrami <vbeltrami@me.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, July 9, 2023 3:17 PM  
**To:** Mayor Peter Micciche <pmicciche@kpb.us>; G\_Notify\_AssemblyClerk <G\_Notify\_AssemblyClerk@kpb.us>  
**Cc:** Ecklund, Cindy <CEcklund@kpb.us>; Hibbert, Brent <bhibbert@kpb.us>; Derkevorkian, Richard <rderkevorkian@kpb.us>; Ribbens, Peter <pribbens@kpb.us>; Cox, Tyson <tysoncox@kpb.us>; Elam, Bill <belam@kpb.us>; Johnson, Brent <bjohnson@kpb.us>; Chesley, Lane <lchesley@kpb.us>; Tupper, Mike <MTupper@kpb.us>  
**Subject:** <EXTERNAL-SENDER>OPPOSITION TO ORDINANCE 2023-16

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Honorable Mayor Peter Micciche  
and members of the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly:

Dear Mr. Mayor et al,

Since sending an email to my KPB Assembly person back on July 5th (see email below this one) I've had various correspondence and in-person discussions with many of my Cooper Landing neighbors. One thing is certain. Everyone cares about having reliable sustainable service for our community and that everyone appreciates the efforts of those who volunteer their time year in and year out to keep the lights on and to provide essential emergency services.

The other certainty is that each of the more than four dozen plus neighbors I've conversed with in the past week were gobsmacked not only about the numbers and how Ordinance 2023-16 would raise their property taxes by by around 100%, but also about the apparent lack of transparency and inclusion of a large segment of our community in getting Resolution 2023-44 introduced to the Assembly. My understanding, as gleaned from a letter written by the former CLES Chief, is that a

review of CLES processes in a 2021 consultant report resulted in a suggestion to consider forming a Cooper Landing Service Area. However, since 2021 I don't believe the suggestion of forming this service area was properly vetted, if at all, by the Cooper Landing Community Club (CLCC). The CLCC, akin to a quasi-governmental entity, and the only thing we have here, is the obvious and proper venue to explore that option. To my knowledge that never happened despite the idea being introduced (at least to those on the CLES board) two years ago, via the consultant report. Someone from CLES mentioned to me that there is no requirement to vet a prospective Assembly resolution/ordinance through CLCC. I know it's not a requirement, but it would have been good process to achieve buy-in from the community at large. Not doing so was either naive or purposeful to avoid a larger discussion.

Equally troubling in the former chief's letter to residents and the mayor (see attached letter titled 'Riley's letter with notations') is that he mentions but makes no succinct attempt to explain why consideration of an Eastern Peninsula-wide Service Area wouldn't be feasible. That concept seems like a very feasible proposal to consider by the community, and from what I understand could be around half the cost or less than the current proposal. Additionally, what feels like all too familiar scare tactics is his statement that failure to pass Ordinance 2023-16 would result in a lowered ISO score and more costly homeowner insurance premiums, and oh by the way since it will now take an hour for an ambulance to get to you, you could die and your house will burn to the ground before the firetruck arrives. I raised the ISO issue with a friend who is a well-versed captain in the Anchorage Fire Department. He knowledgeably refuted that the ISO issue was primarily a scare tactic as well. I've heard wonderful things about past-Chief Shurtleff, and that he did huge things and got us lots of new equipment etc. Fantastic! But all the new stuff needs costly maintenance too over time. Did he build a Cadillac department on a Subaru budget? I'm not sure. And did we pay cash for the Cadillac instead of financing it over time?

Just two years ago, according to my wife, we received a letter from CLES saying - hey we know Covid's been tough, so don't worry about sending a contribution this year. I also don't recall receiving a fund-raising letter in 2022 or in 2023. And yet today it's a major potential catastrophic emergency? I don't get it. Before the community is hit with a giant new tax, these questions and more must be answered.

The bottom line is that this public process was flawed. And those pushing this ordinance, while well-intentioned, obviously have little to no experience in galvanizing a community behind a common purpose. At the June 28th meeting you conducted in Cooper Landing I didn't hear even one person from the CLES board stand up and make a case as to why the community should vote in favor of the proposal they obviously pushed Assemblywoman Ecklund to introduce, effectively hanging her out to dry politically.

Many of us have asked Assemblywoman Ecklund to withdraw the ordinance. If that doesn't happen, I'm requesting all Assembly members vote NO on moving forward with Ordinance 2023-16 at this time, and instead send CLES, CLCC, Assemblywoman Ecklund and the entire community back to the drawing board to develop a plan we can all get behind to have a right-sized, properly funded, and robust emergency services operation.

Respectfully,

# Vince Beltrami

PO Box 569  
Cooper Landing, AK  
907-244-6852

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Cindy Ecklund <[ecklundc@gmail.com](mailto:ecklundc@gmail.com)>  
**Subject: Re:** <EXTERNAL-SENDER>KPB Assembly resolution 2023-44  
**Date:** July 5, 2023 at 7:54:01 AM AKDT  
**To:** Vince Beltrami <[vbeltrami@me.com](mailto:vbeltrami@me.com)>

Hello,

Thank you for contacting me regarding your choice on a Cooper Landing Emergency Service Area (CLESA) at this time. Hopefully your continued support of Cooper Landing emergency volunteers will always meet your emergency needs. This week I will share the communication choice totals with Mayor Micciche. Please continue to spread the word about contacting me by email, text or call.

Best regards,

On Fri, Jun 30, 2023 at 10:16 PM Vince Beltrami <[vbeltrami@me.com](mailto:vbeltrami@me.com)> wrote:

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Greetings Cindy,

At the last minute I heard about a meeting at the Cooper Landing Community Center on June 28th. What I gathered at that meeting I found deeply disturbing and an affront to good transparent public processes, which I believe you know I spent most of my career involved in.

Like just about everyone I want good reliable service from CLES, and I applaud the service of the volunteers who have dedicated their time and commitment.

That being said, as it was relayed to me, the CLES board apparently represented to you that the community was solidly behind the effort to establish a service area here, and that most of the community was behind the effort to move this resolution forward to the Borough Assembly. I'm sure the CLES board is well-intentioned, however, if they made that representation to you they certainly didn't do their homework, because I don't know anyone who was aware, much less brought into the loop on this major community issue.

I'd estimate there were about 75-80 people in attendance at the June 28th meeting, and to my knowledge there may have only been one or two folks there in the room from the CLES board, which in itself is quite telling. They should all have been there presenting a unified front if they fully supported the idea.

The overwhelming majority of people in that room were absolutely not in support, and they probably represented a solid 25% of property owners in the community. Many seemed completely unaware of the fact this proposal was on this fast track and could be approved at the July 11th KPB Assembly meeting to be placed before Cooper Landing voters this fall. I've spoken to about two dozen of my neighbors in the last couple days since the meeting and not one of them supports this resolution, or knew anything about it!

I also understand the CLES board meeting where they voted to support this concept moving forward was not well announced, and that only one person from the public was there, and that her attempt at public comment was interrupted by a board member and summarily dismissed. I wished I had known about it. I would have been there and made myself heard.

I'm certainly not against paying my fair share to help protect the community. But my biggest problem with how this came down is that it wasn't done nearly as transparently as it should have been. The CLES board should have done much better at inviting the community into the process. It feels like they were trying to fast track this and didn't want to hear any concerns from those who may have questioned the plan and slowed it down. That's a huge red flag for me, and based on this alone, I strongly oppose moving this proposal forward. I'd also be happy to work with you, CLES board members, CL Community Club members et al to discuss all the options possible going forward. In fact, the fact that this was not brought in front of the CL Community Club is another major red flag.

While the fact that this would more than double my current property taxes is startling, even more startling is the fact that, as reported by the mayor, the level of service would remain essentially the same. Twice as much tax for the same level of service is absurd. I've spoken to Mayor Micciche and I know he is committed to doing what makes the community happy, and that he thinks there are other ways to move this issue forward that could gain more support, and I committed to him that I would make myself available to engage in the process, and I'll make the same

commitment to you as well. From what I understand, and from our phone conversation prior to your election, I felt we were pretty well aligned.

Finally, if this were to make it to the October election, we will be facing a huge amount of time and probably significant cost in having to battle this to kill it at the ballot box. I would much prefer to spend my time working on solutions that can gain widespread support from the community. But if it does move to the ballot, I will expend a lot of energy to make sure it doesn't pass in this current iteration.

**I appreciate that you took what was represented to you as an issue with broad community support and put some elbow grease into it. However, I would greatly appreciate it, as would the majority of my neighbors, if you would withdraw this resolution and get more of the community engaged in a process we can all support. It seems to me as if the CLES board has put you in a tough spot, and misrepresented the amount of support that exists for this specific proposal. In fact, I have no idea how they came to that conclusion without engaging the entire community. But I believe this would be the wisest course of action, and give you an opportunity to build greater trust across the community of Cooper Landing.**

I'd love to speak with you in person or on the phone further, and perhaps get a little more educated on how the process evolved and if we can course correct and move forward positively together. I can be reached most of the time at 907-244-6852.

Sincerely,

**Vince Beltrami**

[17118 Bean Creek Road](#)

P.O. Box 569

Cooper Landing, AK 99572

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Cindy L. Ecklund

907-362-2276

## An Open Letter to the Cooper Landing Community (and Mayor Micciche):

At this point many of you are aware that Cooper Landing Emergency Services has been in the process of pursuing the establishment of a service area. Since 1973 when the Governor established the ambulance and 1974 when the Fire Department was started; CLES has been there for you whenever you called. In those 5 decades there have been solid years, where volunteers were consistent, money was in the bank, and people were treated in town and along the highway. There have been lean years, where volunteers were few, the response area was reduced and the rainy day fund was tapped until something else could be found. These present days are not lean years, but a more dismal situation. At this juncture the Department, and you as community members, face a choice in the name of long term service.

The rhetoric out there says that this is a "rushed process" and the CLES Board is "moving too quickly" in this motion. That couldn't be farther from the truth. In 2021 the Department hired a third party consultant to review operations, finances, look at increasing industry based costs, and provide suggestions to ensure another 50 years of service. At the time, with 40 year old trucks still in service and an entire radio complement needing replacement, the report was clear. Everything from oxygen masks to turnout gear was increasing in cost with supply chain issues. Everything in inventory was, or would be soon, aging out of useful life. CLES would need a major change in revenue to support its basic demands of providing EMS and Fire Services in town. One suggestion was to form its own service area, as the effort before you now asks.

In its current state as a 501c3, CLES relies on ambulance billings, calls for service within EPHESA, grants and donations. Two immediate streams of revenue presented themselves. Deputy Chief Clay Adam, with over 40 years of experience in the medical field and international business, rewrote the CLES billing schedule and worked to setup a new collections agency. This would ensure the best bet that every EMS run billed insurance - and not the individual - appropriately. Collections, however, still cannot guarantee a return. To the day there are locals as well as tourists who haven't paid for their ambulance calls.

Another stream? Increase response on the highway. CLES is paid for calls on the highway corridor by the Borough, something not brought to light in recent presentations. This is based on response of apparatus and personnel, and must be on the highway within 100' right of way. We increased our abilities when we kept a second ambulance in service and found a new to us engine for better, safer, responses. The calls on the highway pay for themselves. A basic \$800 for Fire/Extrication Response with an Engine and 2 trained people. \$600 for an ambulance with a medical provider and driver. \$300 for a First Response with 2. Total? Over \$31,000 in 2021 compared to \$12,800 in 2019. What costs was the goal to keep a firetruck and ambulance in town with volunteers to cover the locals. If 4 of us went out, 4 should stay back. We didn't want a heart attack at the Wildmans Coffee Club or a fire call at the Stump Dump to go unanswered. Now, the Department is unlikely to fill more than those first two units.

Grants. We wrote grants like we had to - because we did. Radios were replaced through the States Code Blue Project and a grant from the Seniors Corporation to the tune of a \$100,000 overhaul. We applied to the Alaska Community Foundation for a match on the ambulance, a new battery operated stretcher, an air compressor for SCBA bottles since we didn't have one and more. The National Volunteer Fire Council and Globe Gear chose us - little Cooper Landing - to be one of 13 Departments in the Country to get 4 sets of turnouts at a \$12,000 value. In December of 2022 the Denis Leary Firefighters Foundation chose us, again, out of 17 departments nationwide to receive a new thermal camera (needed for wall fires, chimney fires and more) and pump equipment for year round water supply. To the tune of over \$600,000 since

who was the consultant and where can i get a copy of the report?

was this suggestion vetted before CLCC in 2021 since it is a community taxation issue? Or anytime prior to Rep Ecklund introducing the resolution?

2020 the department has secured grant funding to support BASIC NEEDS. NOT WANTS. However those are time consuming and take some education to pursue efficiently.

Was the annual letter sent out each of the past three years.? is it possible to determine if one was sent to me?

The donation support of the Community is wonderful. Many of you send checks or cash to the Annual Fund Drive Letter. Almost all of the businesses in town sponsor a golf tournament hole, or contribute where you can. Corporations support us, as CLES was actually the department that secured donated shipping through Span Alaska for the Borough wide extrication equipment Mayor Micciche touted funding for at the June meeting. We secured a donated ambulance, surplus gator, and awarded trailer all through networking and asking. We ask when we fundraise at the Wye - getting yelled at by people with Alaska license plates - with Fill the Waders to try and raise where we can. It is truly appreciated whatever someone can give. At the end of the day, it takes more to maintain the agency than what change someone has in their cupholder or a couple bucks in the cash register donation jar to keep diesel in the tanks.

CLES has tried every exhaustive option to increase funding and maintain responses. The Department has trained dozens of volunteers, with only a few remaining. Alaska is a transient state to begin with and you all know good help is hard to find. The truth of the matter is people must support themselves before they can find time to join and be active with the fire department - Why haven't you? It takes 180 hours to train an EMT. That has changed since 1974. It takes 140 hours to train someone to be a "Firefighter 1" today. Many of you don't have that time, the back, or the willingness to do so. We have. But as calls only increase - 30% annually since 2020 - the agency cannot do it with fewer people. For the last 3 years 5 volunteers answered more than 30 calls a year. Beyond the Chiefs, 2 of them were responsible for answering nearly 70% of the annual calls - year round, not just in the summer. Posters are up at the post office, they used to hang at the grocery store, we have a website with our application on it, all saying the agency needs consistent good people as well as revenue. The simple fact is fewer people are signing up to volunteer nationwide. CLES too, will soon fall victim to a trend of closures when the volunteers stop staffing a building where the boiler fails and the department cannot afford to replace it.

If you're still reading, the writing on the walls is this: CLES has not failed, but it cannot continue to provide service at its current level without drastically increased support through the Community. We held open houses and open meetings to share our achievements, but also to educate you to the present state of affairs. If you chose not to attend, or to turn a blind eye knowing we would be there, that much is on you. The June 28<sup>th</sup> meeting pushed an agenda to say that you will only see "service consistent with today's responses." Another comment was that the effort could wait to see the establishment of an Eastern-wide Peninsula Service area. That is not the case for either. Thirty years ago you had 17 minutes to escape a housefire. Today, that number is closer to 3 minutes with changes in construction and contents. In 2019 CLES response times were over 13 minutes on average to answer a call, not respond to the scene of a call. Through efforts that number dropped to 4 minutes consistently through 2021 and 2022. Today that number is rising to the 10 minute mark as fewer volunteers respond, and equipment continues to outlive its useful life. All of this contributes to a very bleak picture for the Community in responses, care, and agency ratings.

I'm not sure how the text following this statement addresses how an Eastern Pen. Service Area isn't feasible??

Failure to establish a service area now will mean this: your homeowners insurance will increase with a lowered ISO score, you will wait over an hour for an ambulance to get there with transport capable providers, and your house might very well be on the ground before the first firetruck arrives.

I understand we are classified as a protection class 8 area currently. Is Riley saying that a no vote will result in an immediate reclassification?? Because I think that's the only way we'd end up with a lowered ISO score that could have an impact on my homeowner's policy as far as I know.



The calls the other night were to "do more for CLES" to "thank your volunteers." Much appreciated, but I'll be the first to say that takes more than thoughts and prayers to heal the sick and injured- it takes a trained medical provider on an ambulance that can get there. It also takes more than a "thank you for your service" to keep the lights on.

In 3 years as a responder and Chief with the agency I, along with dedicated volunteers, answered the call to many of your homes and businesses to treat you or your guests, and to investigate and respond to smoke and fires that jeopardized your property. We loaded helicopters, put out chicken coop fires, and picked up dozens of people out of the ditch from where they landed. I left, because the agency couldn't afford my non-benefitted salary to stay (at much less than what the Borough is proposing) without taking away from its operating accounts. I spent my own time off the clock answering calls -if my volunteers didn't get paid why should I have. I spent my income to keep equipment available that the department wouldn't have been able to purchase otherwise. I didn't leave for lack of care for anyone that I called a friend or neighbor. Knowing that even though I may not be there, you as friends and neighbors should know that if you want to keep this service that was built for you open, and the people there today around, please do not support the calls to encourage voting down ordinance 2023-16.

In the coming days before the Assembly votes again on this issue and before you have the chance to vote on this - LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ISSUES - contact a current Board Member, a Community Club Member, or an active volunteer.

The choice is yours Cooper Landing, make it wisely.

Sincerely,



Riley Shurtleff

Past Chief  
Cooper Landing Emergency Services

Past Chairman  
Eastern Peninsula Highway Emergency Services Area



**From:** [Turner, Michele](#)  
**To:** [Ward, Tamera](#)  
**Subject:** FW: New Public Comment to Assembly Members  
**Date:** Monday, July 10, 2023 12:22:05 PM

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## Public Comment Ordinance 2023-16

Michele Turner, CMC  
Acting Borough Clerk  
Kenai Peninsula Borough  
(907) 714-2162 direct

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**From:** Kenai Peninsula Borough <webmaster@borough.kenai.ak.us>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 10, 2023 11:38 AM  
**To:** BoroughAssembly <Borough-Assembly@kpb.us>; Mayor's Department <MayorDepartmental@kpb.us>  
**Cc:** Turner, Michele <MicheleTurner@kpb.us>  
**Subject:** New Public Comment to Assembly Members

**Your Name:** Jean Ann & Alan Nierenberg

**Your Email:** [nchoppin@att.net](mailto:nchoppin@att.net)

**Subject:** Ordinance 2023-16

### Message:

Please distribute the below comment to the Policies and Procedures Committee and full Assembly -

Separate from the discussion of the merits of Ordinance 2023-16, the actual language of the Proposition and associated Yes/No vote is extra-ordinarily vague with a high probability to be misinterpreted by voters.

To properly reflect the significant actions resulting from this Ordinance, the Proposition and Yes/No vote should be re-stated as follows:

“Is the Kenai Peninsula Borough authorized to exercise powers necessary to provide fire protection and emergency medical service within the Cooper Landing Service Area established by Ordinance 2023-\_\_\_\_, inclusive of the levy of additional taxes on property owners in the service area.”

YES \_\_\_\_ a YES vote approves of the Kenai Peninsula Borough establishing the Cooper Landing Emergency Service Area, inclusive of the levy of additional taxes on property owners in the service area.

NO \_\_\_\_\_ a NO vote would prohibit the Kenai Peninsula Borough establishing the Cooper Landing Emergency Service Area with Cooper Landing Emergency Services remaining an independent volunteer organization under local control.

**From:** [Turner, Michele](#)  
**To:** [Ward, Tamera](#)  
**Subject:** FW: <EXTERNAL-SENDER>WILDMAN COFFEE CLUB  
**Date:** Monday, July 10, 2023 1:23:15 PM  
**Attachments:** [WILDMAN COFFEE CLUB.pdf](#)  
[Screenshot 2023-07-10 at 11.08.37 AM.png](#)

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Public Comment Ordinance 2023-16.

Michele Turner, CMC  
Acting Borough Clerk  
Kenai Peninsula Borough  
(907) 714-2162 direct

---

**From:** Vince Beltrami <vbeltrami@me.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 10, 2023 11:53 AM  
**To:** Ecklund, Cindy <CEcklund@kpb.us>; Mayor Peter Micciche <pmicciche@kpb.us>  
**Cc:** G\_Notify\_AssemblyClerk <G\_Notify\_AssemblyClerk@kpb.us>  
**Subject:** <EXTERNAL-SENDER>WILDMAN COFFEE CLUB

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Dear Assemblywoman Ecklund and Mayor Micciche,

Sorry for the repeated continuations of my wordy advocacy. However, this line in the attached image from Riley Shurtlef's letter kind of stuck in my craw as an odd example to use, so I stopped in on the fellas this morning at the 'Wildman's Coffee Club' to see if they'd been following the issue. There were a half-dozen men around the table, and I'd estimate between them there is between 250 and 350 years of bonafide 'living in Cooper Landing' experience and knowledge. Opposition to Ordinance 2023-16 was unanimous. They hadn't yet gotten their emails in, so I asked them if they would sign a statement in opposition. They signed unanimously and without hesitation after a pretty robust discussion of CLES and town history, past and present.

Please add these six names to the registered voters and property owners who OPPOSE Ordinance 2023-16 and wish to see the ordinance withdrawn immediately.

Their signatures are attached, but for clarity I'm reprinting here as well:

1. Keith Freeman
2. Michael Gephardt
3. John Harris
4. Robert Defoe
5. Kenneth Leaders
6. Rudy Green

Respectfully submitted,

**Vince Beltrami**

PO Box 569  
Cooper Landing, AK

way. We increased our abilities when we kept a second ambulance in service and found a new to us engine for better, safer, responses. The calls on the highway pay for themselves. A basic \$800 for Fire/Extrication Response with an Engine and 2 trained people. \$600 for an ambulance with a medical provider and driver. \$300 for a First Response with 2. Total? Over \$31,000 in 2021 compared to \$12,800 in 2019. What costs was the goal to keep a firetruck and ambulance in town with volunteers to cover the locals. If 4 of us went out, 4 should stay back. We didn't want a heart attack at the Wildmans Coffee Club or a fire call at the Stump Dump to go unanswered. Now, the Department is unlikely to fill more than those first two units.

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED PROPERTY OWNERS OF COOPER LANDING WOULD LIKE TO RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THAT REPRESENTATIVE CINDY ECKLUND WITHDRAW ORDINANCE 2023-16 AT THIS TIME, effectively choosing Option 1, as presented by KPB Mayor Peter Micciche in his Report to the Assembly June 12, 2023, and thereby maintaining the status quo - while seeking and working towards viable options for CLES that can be widely supported by our community.

	Name	Address	date	Cooper Landing voter? (Y/N)
1.	Keith Freeman	Bx663	7-10-23	yes
2.	MICHAEL GEPHARDT	37764 SWUG HARBOR	7/10/23	yes.
3.	John Harris	34782 Caribou Hts Cir.	7/10/23	yes
4.	Robert DeFoe	35343 Ptarmigan Pl	7/10/23	yes
5.	Kenut R. Lada	PO Box 523	7-10-23	yes
6.	Rudy C. Green	18350 STERLING Hwy.	7/10/23	YES
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				
13.				
14.				
15.				

## Letter To the Community

Ref: Ordinance Establishing Cooper Landing Emergency Service Area

When I moved to Cooper Landing 5 years ago, I was a naïve Texan who assumed every community had Emergency Services that were appropriately funded to provide an essential level of service commensurate with any other city across the United States. In Texas, each county has an Emergency Service District (ESD) that provides taxation funding for fire and EMS services. Cooper Landing Emergency Services (CLES) currently operates as a 501(c)(3) not for profit.

My first EMS response when I arrived was to the Cooper Landing Boat Launch at 1:00 a.m. for an elderly gentleman who was severely ill. First, I had to respond in my personal truck as the ambulance was out of service and at the mechanic. Second, I had to go to the fire station and get the equipment in order to respond. Third, NO ONE else responded, I was the only person. Fourth, when I realized this was a REAL EMERGENCY and this man needed urgent transport to the hospital, I had to request an ambulance from Sterling and wait 45 minutes while watching him agonize in pain. It was at that moment that I made it my mission to never let this happen again as long as I was volunteering for CLES.

Over the course of the next 2 years, I worked closely with Chief Riley Shurtleff and all the volunteers to bring the department up to a minimum acceptable standard. We trained frequently and spent long hours getting most of our volunteers to the level of EMT-1 and proficient at basic firefighting. We instituted a vigorous EMS billing and collections policy. We belonged to EPHESA – Eastern Peninsula Highway Emergency Services – which reimburses CLES a nominal fee for any calls for service along the highway corridor. We applied for numerous local, state and federal grants. Lastly, we began a vigorous fundraising drive with our community business partners and citizens. As a result of these efforts, we were highly successful in replacing fire protection gear that was 30 years old, replacing outdated and expired EMS equipment and supplies and we got a few “desirables” like a washer and dryer to clean our personal protective equipment & an automated CPR machine through grant funding. Most of the grants were awarded during the COVID pandemic while many of you in our community were being severely impacted. This allowed us to continue to provide a service that was safe for not only our volunteers but also for those who required our services.

We were operating in a 2001 ambulance and 1983 fire truck of which both were unsafe to operate on the roadways and we were spending more donation money

keeping them running than funding day to day operations. Each year, the cost of replacement fire & EMS apparatus continues to climb significantly. We had no choice but to replace these 2 vehicles in an expedient manner or risk paying much higher costs year over year. We elected to purchase new apparatus rather than used. Why new – Fire departments only sell vehicles once they are no longer able to operate safely and the cost of repairs becomes extreme. We were very fortunate in that a member of our local community stepped up and donated \$165,000 toward the purchase of a new ambulance. We applied for and received a grant for the remaining \$50,000 to cover the entire cost of the new ambulance. Unfortunately, we were not able to obtain grant funding to cover the fire truck. We had to finance it over an extended period to ensure donation funding could cover our monthly payments.

Lastly, our department operates out of 3 separate buildings, of which 2 are more than 40 years old and in dire need of repair. As you drive by, you may notice several emergency vehicles parked outside as we are out of indoor space. Firefighting gear is maintained in the same area as we conduct training and administrative operations. It is a well-known fact that this has been linked to an increased risk of cancer in fire fighters.

Today, we operate at a level equivalent to the emergency services you would receive in any other metropolitan area in the lower 48. It is a minimal level of service, but none the less, we will be there when a call for service is requested. All our current funding sources have always been adequate to cover our day-to-day operating expenses. However, since COVID, our operating costs have gone up exponentially. We even set up onsite fuel storage (all donated) to refuel our apparatus and hopefully save fuel costs, however, we are currently charged the same rate as any other citizen without any discounts for bulk purchase. The new ambulance we purchased in 2021 for \$205,000 has gone up \$75,000 to \$280,000 in 2023. A new heart monitor has increased from \$35,000 to \$50,000. Emergency vehicles and equipment only have a certain life span and then must be replaced. Firefighting gear has a 10-year life span and must be replaced to abide by NFPA codes. The gear to outfit one firefighter is \$5000.

We maintain a minimal acceptable level of essential emergency equipment necessary to respond to an emergency within our response area. We do not have any EXTRAS! With the high cost of day-to-day operations, our current funding sources can only go so far. We do not have any extra monies to cover vehicles or major equipment once they reach the end of their life cycle. Grants have become few and far between and typically only fund specific items, not day to day operating costs.



We hope this stimulates some thought as to why we are pursuing a “service area” formation. I have heard Mayor Micciche say he would like to see an Eastern Peninsula Service Area where the tax burden would be shared across several communities and with experienced cost savings for common expenses. While this sounds good in theory, Cooper Landing taxpayers would have to fund most of the cost for the communities of Moose Pass and Hope/Sunrise. Bear Creek taxpayers would have to share the cost for emergency services in Cooper Landing. Combining emergency services across multiple communities may seem like a great idea, reducing the tax burden on any one community, however, convincing other communities to join is a difficult and timely process. We already participate in borough-wide fire & EMS training to reduce those costs while other realized cost savings would be significantly less than expected. While we would fully entertain an “Eastern Service Area”, we do not have the luxury of time to see that to fruition.

As we look toward 2030 and beyond, our department is not sustainable in its currently model. The high operating costs and capital funding needed to allow this department to provide a minimally acceptable level of service cannot be sustained in its current state.

Nobody wants to pay higher taxes! Especially me!! However, emergency services come at a cost. Western Emergency Services (Anchor Point/Ninilchik) are paid for through property taxes, Bear Creek Fire Department is funded through property taxes, Anchorage Fire Department receives significant funding from property taxes. Cooper Landing has 3 commercial establishments where we respond on a regular basis. Those 3 entities have donated less than \$2000 total over the past 3 years and most of the EMS services billed from these establishments go unpaid. If you want to ensure we respond when your home catches fire or your loved one falls ill or injured, we must all share in the cost equally as emergency services are NOT FREE NOR CHEAP!!

There are many opinions and questions being shared throughout the community.

1. The Fire Department and EMS should be separate departments.

We share a common mission to protect the citizens of this community. Regardless of whether it is a fire or medical emergency, we are trained in all aspects of these emergency services. All our fire fighters are trained in EMS and all EMS providers are trained in firefighting. The combination provides a synergy for one another.

2. CLES wastes money on unnecessary equipment.

We have purchased or acquired a significant amount of equipment over the past 5 years. The “desirable” equipment was obtained 100% through GRANT FUNDING, while ESSENTIAL equipment was obtained through GRANT FUNDING, DONATIONS and other funding sources.

3. Why do fire trucks respond with ambulances? Isn't that a waste of money?

SAFETY IS OUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY! We use our large fire apparatus to block the highway when we are working a motor vehicle accident to protect our first responders from unsafe drivers. I get notifications EVERY DAY of first responders getting struck and killed while working accidents on the highways across the U.S.

The terrain in Cooper Landing is extreme. Try carrying a 200 lb. person with a fractured ankle ½ mile down a trail or down a flight of stairs with only 2 people. The SAFETY OF OUR RESPONDERS IS #1.

4. Why should the taxpayers in Cooper Landing pay for emergency services provided to those who live outside Cooper Landing?

We do not control who comes through our community. We are already reimbursed by the borough for calls on the highway corridor through EPHESA. However, this is only minimal funding and a small portion of our operating budget. There may be federal highway dollars available, however, it is up to local politicians to seek out that funding.

Respectfully,

Clay Adam, MSN, MBA, CFRN, FP-C  
Deputy Chief, EMS  
Cooper Landing Emergency Services, Inc.

**From:** [Turner, Michele](#)  
**To:** [Ward, Tamera](#)  
**Subject:** FW: <EXTERNAL-SENDER>Ordinance 2023-16  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 11, 2023 9:00:15 AM

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## Public comment Ordinance 2023-16

Michele Turner, CMC  
Acting Borough Clerk  
Kenai Peninsula Borough  
(907) 714-2162 direct

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**From:** Sharon Saunders <sharon@sellsalaska.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 10, 2023 8:02 PM  
**To:** G\_Notify\_AssemblyClerk <G\_Notify\_AssemblyClerk@kpb.us>  
**Cc:** Sharon Saunders <sharon@sellsalaska.com>  
**Subject:** <EXTERNAL-SENDER>Ordinance 2023-16

Dear Assembly Members,

Many of our Cooper Landing Property owners, both Residential and Commercial Business's are concerned about the timing and avenue of Public Notice of your proposed Resolutions. All of the property owners do not subscribe to the Cooper Landing Community Crier, nor do all subscribers read every submittal of the "Crier".

This presents an issue of very few of the property owners receiving you Public Notice of Community Meetings and notices of actions taken at the Kenai Peninsula Borough.

The most current issue of the Proposed 2023-16, the establishing a new Cooper Landing Service Area is not known by about two thirds of the owners. Our suggestion is to have the Borough send by mail Notices of such importance to property owners mailing address from the tax records.

Many of us feel this has been very rushed and needs the attention and more time to prepare for such meetings. This timing is in the middle of our busy Summer season with only a days notice to change schedules to accommodate your meetings.

We all realize that you have a very busy schedule also and do appreciate your diligent attention to the matters at hand. The need to inform all who would be impacted by such a change is paramount. We want to be knowledgeable about the effects of such a change. In speaking to several of our property owners after the June 28th meeting in Cooper Landing, many were not clear on what they were to do. Not everyone is computer literate or has the wherewithal to send an e mail which we were asked to do by the next day or at latest the next week. Many are involved with running their business, which is a full tilt at this time of the year. Also the Senior Exemption needs to be clarified. Many who are now exempt think that won't be adjusted. Actually as the Assessed value does up it could be adjusted and has been for some. Their thinking is they don't care because their taxes will not be effected.

For those of us who stayed the entire meeting and received the hand out , the issue is pretty clear. However, we were told to send a e mail to Cindy Ecklund either for or against the proposal.

You're sample of the e mails showed that there was a third choice, which is not showing on the "sample Ballot" if it should go to vote. Which side does this fall on?

Please consider these issues when you consider moving ahead with this . I believe "Public Notice" is an absolute must for our Community. I am suggesting a immediate mailing and a date for response more flexible for summer schedules. In other words, shelf this until these issues are resolved. A fair Public Notice is not what was done.

Please consider sending out Notices to all of the property owners before continuing with this .

I am a Graduate of the Real Estate Institute , which abides by a high standard of care and sworn to follow the National Code of Ethics, and a member of the National Realtors Association.

Thank you for your Kind attention,  
Sharon Saunders, Cooper Landing Resident

*Sharon Saunders*  
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**Realty ONE Group Aurora**  
**Alaska**  
[www.sharonsellsalaska.com](http://www.sharonsellsalaska.com)

## Ward, Tamera

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**Subject:** FW: New Public Comment to Assembly Members

**From:** Kenai Peninsula Borough <[webmaster@borough.kenai.ak.us](mailto:webmaster@borough.kenai.ak.us)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, July 12, 2023 10:10 AM

**To:** BoroughAssembly <[Borough-Assembly@kpb.us](mailto:Borough-Assembly@kpb.us)>; Mayor's Department <[MayorDepartmental@kpb.us](mailto:MayorDepartmental@kpb.us)>

**Cc:** Turner, Michele <[MicheleTurner@kpb.us](mailto:MicheleTurner@kpb.us)>

**Subject:** New Public Comment to Assembly Members

**Your Name:** Mitch Dickinson

**Your Email:** [mitchel\\_dickinson@live.com](mailto:mitchel_dickinson@live.com)

**Subject:** Kenai Burrough Service Area for Fire and EMT

**Message:**

Hello All, My name is Mitch Dickinson. I am a property owner and Board member of Cooper Landing Emergency Services. The ordinance to create a service area in Cooper Landing was pulled at last night's meeting due to an enormously un-tolerable mill rate. The CLES (Cooper Landing Emergency Services) is still facing a very difficult financial path ahead and through the coming winter. Somehow, I am confident that through the sturdy resolve and perseverance that this organization has always had, we will manage to get through it. The only positive coming out of this service area creation failure, is that it has raised awareness of the needs of the many small communities unable to properly fund emergency services. It has been brought up by some in the Burrough government that now is the time to work on creation of a Burrough wide service area. It has also been brought up that this should be an East/ West creation. I strongly disagree with this notion. I believe, as do a strong majority of others in Cooper Landing that I have spoken with, that any new Burrough service area created should be Burrough wide. The east side of the peninsula is small communities with limited populations, property values and basically no large industry tax bases to rely on. The western peninsula contains the large majority of population and the commercial property tax base needed to support an emergency service area. The financial problems the CLES have experienced would still remain too high a mill rate on too few of people in the creation of an East Peninsula area while the west area would have a vastly larger revenue stream spread over a wider amount of people and property values thus keeping that mill rate much much lower. The only fair and equitable way is to create a Burrough wide ONE area system. Too separate it into separate east/west areas is the way to create haves and have nots. This Burrough is not divided into two separate groups in any other manner so why would this make any common sense to anyone. I hope the Assembly will provide leadership and proper financial prudence to all of the citizens, not disparaging them by the creation of separate areas for something as critical to life as the need for proper and efficient emergency service response. Thank you for your consideration.