
From: Coby Taylor <taylorcoby32@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 4, 2026 8:51 PM
To: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: <EXTERNAL-SENDER>Please forward to assembly

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Coby Taylor

[33735 Nash Rd.](#)

P.O. Box 2381

Seward, AK 99664

Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly

[144 N Binkley St](#)

[Soldotna, AK](#)

Dear Borough Assembly,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed reduction in funding associated with lowering the mill rate for the Bear Creek Fire Service Area. This action would have serious consequences for the safety, preparedness, and well-being of our entire community.

First, I would like to note that I have taken the time to speak with the current fire chief and have also seen firsthand that finances were not managed responsibly by previous leadership. For example, when the building was constructed, insurance and utility costs were not properly accounted for. Additionally, the apparatus replacement schedule was neglected, and anticipated grants were included in the budget but never secured, leaving the community with a false sense of financial stability.

The current chief has taken on the burden left by these past shortcomings and is actively working to correct them. One of the most significant issues has been training. Previously, there was very little

structure or accountability for safety, which led to injuries on calls and, in turn, skyrocketing insurance costs.

Over the past few years, the current chief and paid staff have created substantial cost-saving and growth opportunities. For instance, training and classes have been made completely free for volunteers. I joined two years ago with no experience, and these opportunities were available simply by showing up. As training programs have expanded, more instructors have volunteered their time, which has reduced the need to hire outside instructors and has benefited not only our department but neighboring ones as well. This progress is a direct result of the paid staff's effort and organization.

Another example of cost savings occurred this past winter when the primary fire response apparatus required an engine rebuild. After a call, a fluid leak was discovered, and further inspection revealed the need for major repairs. Instead of outsourcing the work, the full-time staff, with assistance from a local vendor, chose to complete the rebuild in-house. External quotes were as high as \$80,000, plus at least \$2,000 in transport costs. The truck was returned to service in just five working days at a total cost of approximately \$10,000. It is highly unlikely this would have been possible without the current paid staff.

In addition, the staff have installed mobile radios and in apparatus chargers, saving thousands in travel and labor costs that would otherwise require technicians from Anchorage or Soldotna. They have also taken a proactive approach to maintenance, including replacing lights, repairing backup cameras, swapping seasonal tires, performing scheduled cleanings, and handling repairs of all sizes—even engine rebuilds.

Further cost-saving measures include the purchase of a snowplow for a department pickup, eliminating the need for contracted snow removal services that previously charged regardless of snowfall. These efforts have saved the community thousands of dollars annually.

Because of these efficiencies, the department has been able to replace apparatus on schedule, such as acquiring a new tanker. This equipment is more reliable, easier to operate, and reduces the likelihood of mechanical failure during emergencies. Another example is Engine 119, which was previously a difficult and unsafe roll-back truck. It has since been converted into a functional secondary firefighting engine, significantly improving response capability while avoiding the cost of purchasing a new apparatus.

One of the biggest cost-saving efforts has been the completion of the upstairs area. When the station was originally finished, the upstairs was left incomplete, with plans to finish it at a later date but without any funding strategy in place. The current paid staff, along with volunteers, have received permission to take on this project themselves by fundraising and donating their time after hours to see it through. As it stands now, the living area is nearly complete, which will provide volunteers with a place to stay and create opportunities for growth within the department.

In conclusion, reducing the mill rate would place the department on a downward trajectory, creating a false sense of security about maintaining current service levels. Volunteer numbers would likely decline, training opportunities would decrease, and the overall level of preparedness would suffer. This could ultimately lead to increased injuries and greater risk to the community.

I urge you to take these points into consideration when discussing the proposed mill rate reduction.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Coby Taylor

From: megan turner <megant170@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 6, 2026 1:31 PM
To: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Cc: cecklund@kpb.com
Subject: <EXTERNAL-SENDER>Funding Cap

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the KPB system. Please use caution when responding or providing information. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, know the content is safe and were expecting the communication.

To the Assembly,

I support funding the cap the cap fully as my son has been a recipient of it during his years in the KPB system. Without it, he would not have been able to participate in all the sports he played throughout his education which has been the MAIN focus of his educational career!

Being a single mom, in a single income household, my son being able to participate in school sports has been a God send!

I hope this testimony helps in opening the eyes of the 84 members (!) opposed to such an opportunity to those less fortunate!

Best Wishes,
Megan Turner
901-237-5899

From: Dana Abdalla <yabadaba00@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 8, 2026 2:23 PM
To: Turner, Michele
Subject: <EXTERNAL-SENDER>

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Please, please fund to the cap! We need our teachers, counselors and librarians! We already lost our middle school and shouldn't have to loose more!

Thank you.

Dana Abdalla

From: Kenai Peninsula Borough <webmaster@kpb.us>
Sent: Monday, May 18, 2026 3:35 PM
To: BoroughAssembly; Mayor's Department
Cc: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: New Public Comment to Assembly Members

Your Name: Maureen Todd

Your Email: maureen.florence96@gmail.com

Subject: Education Funding

Message:

Prioritizing education funding is a proven strategy for community prosperity, supported by economic research:

Protecting Property Values: Research from the National Tax Association shows a 10% increase in school spending bolsters student achievement and increases home prices. Funding to the cap acts as "homeowner insurance," protecting the equity of every resident by keeping the Peninsula a desirable destination for families.

The Business Imperative: The U.S. Chamber of Commerce notes that quality education is a "business imperative." To keep our fishing, tourism, and healthcare industries competitive, we must provide a workforce with modern skills. Funding now prevents a "skills gap" that local businesses would otherwise pay for later through high recruitment and training costs.

Reducing Future Tax Burdens: Research from Nobel Memorial Prize-winning economist James Heckman demonstrates that investing in quality education is one of the most efficient ways to drive economic growth. His work shows that these investments significantly reduce future social costs—such as police, judicial, and remedial expenses—while increasing the tax base through higher graduation rates and a more capable workforce.

Driving Economic Growth: Foundational economic research (such as Gary Becker's Human Capital) confirms that our residents' skills are our most valuable assets. Strategic investment in our students leads to higher productivity, a more robust tax base, and a stronger local economy.

Funding to the cap is a pragmatic strategy to ensure the Kenai Peninsula remains a viable and competitive region for both families and industry. Thank you for your continued collaborative, solutions-oriented approach. I hope we can prioritize our schools as a fundamental component of our borough's infrastructure and future growth.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

From: Ariel B <h2oskirel@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 18, 2026 2:53 PM
To: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: <EXTERNAL-SENDER>Please forward to Assembly

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the KPB system. Please use caution when responding or providing information. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, know the content is safe and were expecting the communication.

Dear Borough Assembly,

My name is Ariel Brackin, and I am the wife of the current Chief of the Bear Creek Fire Service Area. I'm writing to you today to encourage you to see the current decision regarding the mill rate with clarity, truth, and without bias.

The public, and the sponsoring Assembly Member, are being sold a lie by a disgruntled former Fire Chief. They are petitioning you from a standpoint of false information. They do not understand the full scope of what is at stake, nor the motivations behind it. My hope is that you will look at the facts, the history, and the intentions of those involved on both sides. I beg you to make your decisions based on the safety, well being, and healthy growth of this community.

Over the last 19 years, there have been 3 Fire Chiefs at Bear Creek. In 2015, Mark Beals was fired from that role. That year, Connie Bacon was hired to fill the position, which she held for 5 years, until retiring in 2020. At which time, Richard Brackin moved up from the Administrative Assistant position to the position of Fire Chief.

The series of events that has led us here began in 2007. Mark Beals was the Fire Chief, and the citizens of Bear Creek voted to approve a debt on a new Fire Station. That administration failed to do their due diligence in accounting for current or possible future costs associated with utilities, insurance, building and grounds maintenance, and more. Most of these costs should have been anticipated and coupled with a functional plan for completion and upkeep. Chief Beals neglected to correctly or responsibly inform the public of the full scope of the project, or who would benefit from its use. The building was designed as a "Fire and Emergency Services facility," (as worded on the proposition summary for the 2007 ballot) yet the public believes it to be a community-use building. This continues to cause confusion as to its purpose, and availability, nearly 20 years later. Beals makes no public clarification to ease the discord on social media despite it being the building he built. The new station was built under false claims and promises, and to this day it remains unfinished due to the prior administration's negligence. Nevertheless, the debt was approved, and the Assembly set the mill rate accordingly. The same rate we have today. Since 2012, the community has grown, and the costs have risen. Yet the mill rate has not increased in 14 years.

In 2017, Richard Brackin moved to Alaska from Montgomery, AL after fulfilling a very full 20 year career in the fire service. When he retired, and we moved to Seward, we had already been building our future here over the span of 7 years. We were determined to remain debt free, and physically built our house entirely ourselves. We would make our way back once a year or so after saving enough vacation time and money, build as much as we possibly could, and then return to Alabama to do it all again. I am telling you this to help you better understand the mindset, motivation, and drive of Chief Brackin. Nothing of his personal or

professional history would indicate anything other than a determination toward fiscal responsibility, and a dedication to service in his community.

He began with the Bear Creek Fire Department in the summer of 2017 as a Volunteer. Connie Bacon was the Chief at that time. Immediately, he was aware of how severely under-trained and under-equipped the Volunteers were. Brackin was concerned by what he saw and experienced, knowing how quickly injury could occur. However, even with his 20 years of extensive fire training and knowledge, he approached the volunteer position with humility. He wanted to first learn the way the Volunteers operated, and then find ways to help increase knowledge and ability. In November of 2017, he was hired as the Administrative Assistant. Throughout his time in that position, he worked hard to improve every possible area he could within his still-limited scope. He started (and led) an additional training night, giving up his own personal time, to increase the knowledge, speed, and competency of any of the volunteers that were willing to improve.

In 2020 the former Chief (Bacon) retired, and Richard was hired to the position. When that transfer took place, he discovered to what degree the finances had been mishandled. When the station was built under Mark Beals' tenure as Fire Chief, it had many costly long-term design flaws; flaws large and small, that continue to contribute to costs beyond the originally projected amount. Additionally, the budget was a mess. The Fire Department had been horribly mismanaged by the previous Chiefs, and had gone unchecked for years. Richard didn't take to social media or publicly shame them, he just got to work. He was offered the opportunity to raise the mill rate at one point, and without a pause turned it down. The last thing he wanted to do was further the tax burden on the public. We have also been eligible for the Homestead Exemption on our home, and he has never pursued it. He feels as though it would be inappropriate for us to benefit while he is Chief.

Richard has been working for the last 6 years to address the numerous issues of the building he inherited in the most creative and fiscally responsible ways possible, most of which the public has chosen to remain ignorant of. Things that might seem small or obvious, like changing all the light bulbs, at no cost to the public, to be the most cost-effective LED lights possible, which has shown a significant impact on the electrical bill. The 2nd floor of the station has been unfinished since it was built. The cost quoted to finish it was going to be \$600,000. Chief Brackin, with help from the Volunteers, has cut that cost down to an estimated \$35,000, and they have been finishing it themselves, devoting their own time and energy after hours to keep the project from burdening the public. Last year alone, he logged over 750 additional hours working for the betterment of this community without compensation. There is example after example of Richard's efforts and creative approaches trying his best to correct the mishandling and mistakes of previous Fire Chiefs, all the while he has been under scrutiny and attack by disgruntled community members for 5 of his 6 years in the position. He has never publicly responded to the attacks, never emotionally lashed out at the unfairness of the outlandish and unfounded accusations. He just wants to do the job he was hired to do, "I'm a Fire Chief, not a Politician."

This most recent attempt to reduce the mill rate needs to be seen for the motivations behind it, and what it will cost the community. Practically speaking, it would affect the fire department by essentially setting it back to the level of care they could administer before 2017. What that means is a longer response time of 9 minutes, rather than the 3 minutes as it currently is, and a decreased level of training, ability, and knowledge of personnel. As of today, approximately 90% of the Volunteers at Bear Creek Fire are trained to a minimum level of FF1 and EMT 1, in 2016 less than half met that minimum. Those are only 2 quick examples; there are many more areas that this would impact. What it would mean for the community could be catastrophic. When considering what does and does not deserve priority funding, why is life-saving emergency care even being considered negotiable?

This is not an opportunity to cut back an over inflated budget for a greedy business. This is the emergency response that directly impacts the health and well being of our children, friends, and neighbors in

their times of greatest need. This is a group of people who give their heart and soul to be prepared and equipped to handle the worst moments of someone else's life.

Chief Brackin has pulled this department out of the red with nothing more than what the previous chiefs had access to, and he's done it with determination, heart, and transparency under *constant* discouragements, criticism and attack from the very people he's working so hard for.

I beg you to consider what you're risking if you choose to decrease the rate.

Thank you,

Ariel Brackin