

CITY OF SEWARD

P.O. Box 167
410 Adams Street
Seward, Alaska 99664-0167



- Main Office (907) 224-4050
- Police (907) 224-3338
- Harbor (907) 224-3138
- Fire (907) 224-3445
- City Clerk (907) 224-4046
- Community Development (907) 224-4049
- Utilities (907) 224-4050
- Fax (907) 224-4038

8 July 2016

Honorable Commissioners and members of the Assembly,

The City of Seward writes to ask that the Kenai Peninsula Borough Planning Commission not recommend, and that the Assembly not enact Ordinance 2016-25.

The Ordinance memo takes issue with Alaska Statute 29.40.020 as inappropriate, but posits that since local governments can't change state statute, then a workaround is in order. We disagree. Ordinance 2001-29 did align Borough Code with State law, and provides the method to maintain that alignment, and the required apportionment, into the future. What it does not do is create an ever-increasing number of commissioners. The memo's assumption that it would appear to be based on another assumption, that the rate of population increase outside the cities will always outpace the rate of increase inside the cities. This may be the case as of the 2010 census, but has not always and likely will not always be the case.

Maintaining or increasing the number of Commission seats has been characterized as "bad government". We believe it is representative government. It is true that a larger commission costs more, but it would be over-simplification to approach this as merely a math problem. The proposed savings from this change do not appear to outweigh the loss of representation, even if carried to the statutorily require minimum of five members.

Though numerous, the seats and the expertise of those who fill them, are not duplicative. The Ordinance suggests that since the Assembly functions just fine with nine members, it must follow that the Commission would as well. These are different functions: the Assembly acts legislatively, enacting laws and policy across broad classes of the population or the whole population of the Borough. The Commission more often considers issues addressing a specific parcel or use, whereby familiarity and local knowledge become more pertinent. Members responsible for larger territories will need to work harder to bring that knowledge to the rest of the body. Fewer commissioners with first-hand knowledge specific to the matter before the body will result in a greater reliance on staff reports and recommendations. The right mix of expert staff and a vigorous and knowledgeable Commission is the one laid out in Ordinance 2001-29, that is working well today, and does not require fixing.

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Finally, the ordinance as proposed creates more room for divisiveness than unity by creating perceived winners and losers between cities, and by extension between the cities and the unorganized area of the Borough. The Mayor's job will be awkward at best in selecting applicants from between the cities as written, and from among a larger competing pool as may be amended in the future.

The City of Seward respectfully requests that this Ordinance not be enacted. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Jean Bardarson'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Jean Bardarson,
Mayor