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Public Comment to Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly

Re: Ordinance 2024-19-24 Authorizing the Acquisition of 80 acres of Real Property Located in Seward, Alaska ...

Dear Assembly,

The KPB alleged pursuit of purchasing Blueberry Hill under 2024-19-24 is misguided. Passage of this amendment would appropriate \$25,000 for an access feasibility study in partnership with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority which would pay the remaining \$25,000. If successful, the Borough would appropriate \$1,200,000 plus another \$50,000 for due-diligence costs and closing on 80 acres of private land, Blueberry Hill, adjacent to Questa Woods and Camelot subdivisions. The reality is that the purchase of this property is key to access an adjoining plot of 2,300 acres of KPB-owned or managed lands and the 195 acres of Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority land. Thinking that this purchase will create affordable housing for the residents of Seward is a misguided idea at best.

- Developing an access road from the base of the Blueberry Hill at the end of Knotwood Street to the top of the ridges and pushing electric utilities up this mountainside will be very expensive. Road maintenance, especially in the winter, will also be a burden on the limited resources of the Borough. The properties are on bedrock which will prove to be expensive for septic systems and wells. Can this ground even pass a “perk” test for a septic systems or will mostly need to be mound systems? This is not the “affordable” housing that Seward needs. Additionally, there are other residential subdivisions in the works. There is a plan for housing in the lot that QAP developed for the Crown Point road improvement at the Elde property. Aso, there is substantial subdivision underway at the top of Dora Way, much of it yet to be sold. Seward needs affordable, high-density housing such as apartment buildings. Blueberry Hill isn’t going to be either affordable to the majority of Seward resident or high-density
- This 80 acres is the site of a zip line business. The zip line uses a small portion of this parcel to operate their business. It is steep property connecting to adjacent KPB land and Alaska Mental Health Trust land which is stranded absent somebody funding the construction of an access road. These high elevations are exposed to extreme weather and strong winds. I have lived at the base of this hill since 1994. I have personally

traversed this parcel many time prior to the zip line business moving in. It was logged in the 90's and I believe that there are 6 or 7 switchbacks to get to the top. Some were big enough for log decks back in the day. Anybody that proposes to develop this property for housing needs to get some boots on the ground, 1st hand experience with the steepness of the terrain and structure of the peaks and valleys. During breakup and extreme rain events water pours down from the upper reaches to the lower elevations eroding around anything in its way.

- How does the Mental Health Trust intend to develop their parcel? It is rumored that they want to log the property. Is this accurate? If so, the pain of logging trucks running up and down the gravel roads of Questa Woods will be paid by the residents. This traffic will cause a huge deterioration of these small country roads. The initial ¾ mile from the Seward highway in is paved. It looks like a discount paving job due to the heaves and potholes that have developed. This precious pavement will quickly unravel with exposure to 100,000 pound truckloads of timer. The cost of repair to these roads will be the burden of the KPB. The residents of this neighborhood routinely walk the small roads, kids ride their bikes or walk. School children walking to the bus stop, will be at an extreme risk during this logging venture. Why not just let the timber stand and collect the "carbon tax credits"?
- The neighborhood to the north of the property, barely noted on the map, is Questa Woods. This ties directly to the zip line business via Knotwood Dr at the base of the hill. All of the traffic to and from this new subdivision will be channeled from the Seward Highway to Stoney Creek Rd, crossing the 2 lane bridge across an alluvial creek on Bruno Dr to Knotwood Dr at the base of the hill. This is for the most part gravel roads maintained by the KPB. This entire area, Questa Woods along Bruno St, is subject to flooding and loss of property from Stoney Creek, and subject to flood-associated road closures.
- The intersection of Stoney Creek Ave with the Seward Highway includes a railroad crossing that is so close to the highway that school buses are not allowed into this subdivision. All the students on the residential side of the crossing must walk or be picked up at this intersection. I estimate the distance from the highway to this potential residential area to be more than 2 miles. Presently many of the students walk back and forth in the dark and inclement weather. Additionally, there is a very health brown and black bear population in the area due to the fish in the creek and blueberries on the hills. And of course there are moose. Mothers dropping calves in spring and the bears in pursuit of that fine meal. A few years back a child walking to the bus stop in the Bear Creek area was attacked by a brown bear sow. Luckily the youngster knew what to do and the bear rolled him around some and lost interest. The same bears roam along this hillside between Nash Rd and Bear Creek

- Although the packet map prominently features Camelot, a subdivision to the south, there is no road connection or bridge north across Salmon Creek from Camelot. The greater majority of the MHT parcel abuts the Camelot subdivision. If MHT wants to develop their parcel why involve the borough, except that they get a partner in the cost. Why not access this land off Roundtable Dr at the top of Camelot subdivision? Hopefully I don't sound like I am endorsing all this traffic thru the Camelot neighborhood, I'm not. Neither of these areas should be subject to this folly. Why didn't the MHT just purchase the zipline property without involving the KPB under the guise of developing affordable residential housing in a such hugely expensive manner? This proposition leaves many unanswered questions. In fact it comes as a complete surprise to all of the affected residential neighbors.
- Very steep slopes, bedrock, expensive road construction and electric utility extension, expensive septic and well systems, no school bus service. This isn't a choice

I encourage you to check out this parcel, the elevation contours, and the access through Questa Woods on the ViewKPB website before you appropriate funds for the road study or pursue the over million dollar property purchase. This is not a realistic or feasible solution for the area's housing needs. Nor is it a welcome intrusion the neighborhood

Sincerely

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