



Nikiski Community Council

February 2, 2015

To: Wayne Ogle – KPB Nikiski Assemblyman

Re: Letter of Support for Law Enforcement Service Area Ordinance

Dear Assemblyman Ogle,

The North Peninsula Community Council, dba Nikiski Community Council, is supporting a Kenai Peninsula Borough assembly ordinance asking the residents of Nikiski to vote on creation of a law enforcement service area.

Background of the Problem and New Ordinance:

The Nikiski community was surveyed during the summer of 2000 asking residents to prioritize their community concerns. The question was posed, “What don’t you like about the community”. The three top responses were:

1. Lack of road service or bad roads
2. Junk cars and buildings
3. Crime and drugs

Subsequently a group of concerned citizens met for creating a visioning document that addressed the community concerns and establishing 20-year goals. The Nikiski Community Action Plan resulted and was published in May, 2001 and included:

Objective 3 – Promote the safety and health of the area’s residence

- 1) Explore alternatives with the Alaska Department of Public Safety to increase law enforcement presence in the North Peninsula Area
- 2) Investigate the implementation of a public safety program utilizing community based peace officers

The Nikiski community progressed towards rectifying the crime and drugs problem by creating a Borough ordinance for a law enforcement service area. A KPB ordinance was processed which brought the matter to a community vote in 2004. At that time the community voted down the new law enforcement service area.

In November, 2012 a group of concerned citizens met to update and validate the Nikiski Community Action Plan. Again the action plan forum prompted the participants to respond to, “What bugs you about Nikiski?”, and include the following responses:

- “Lack of law enforcement, slow emergency response times”
- “Community drug problems”

The updated Nikiski Community Action Plan was published in November 2012 and included:

GOAL E: PROMOTE THE SAFETY AND HEALTH OF THE AREA’S RESIDENTS

Objective 1 – Increase law enforcement presence in the North Peninsula area.

Action Items:

- 1) Explore alternatives with the Alaska Department of Public Safety to increase law enforcement presence in the North Peninsula area
 - a) Investigate options for a trooper office in Nikiski
- 2) Promote funding and pursue the presence of School Resource Officers (SRO) at the Nikiski Middle/High school as a way to improve safety and improved response times.
- 3) Promote implementation of a public safety program utilizing community watch programs

During the fall of 2013 a rash of community burglaries again brought the community together at several highly charged meetings to express their dissatisfaction with State Trooper involvement to deter local property crimes, their slow response times, and their inability to correct widespread drug problems. In October the Nikiski Community Council was asked to sponsor a fact-finding committee on what the problems are, and make recommendations to address property crime and promote the long-term safety of area residents. The committee met weekly through January 2015 and presented their summary findings with recommendations on January 26. The committee report included the following items:

1. The community of Nikiski has a drug problem that fuels a property crime problem. The property crime problem cannot be solved without addressing the drug problem.
2. The crime problem is also related to a Judicial system problem. Addressing this problem is long-term and outside the immediate scope of the committee but a group of concerned citizens was formed and, using social media, is attempting to raise awareness of what is happening to alleged criminals once they make it into the courts.
3. AK State Troopers are focused on highway patrol and emergency response. They are not an agency equipped or manned to provide consistent investigative services necessary to address the Nikiski drug and property crime problem. The committee concluded that relying solely on the Troopers was not in our long-term best interest.
4. The committee determined that the quickest way to affect our community's security was a two-fold process: 1) to request additional trooper support to provide immediate relief of lengthy emergency response, and 2) to create a law enforcement service area to focus on Nikiski crime. This service area would be created with the same boundaries as the current Fire Service Area.
5. In order to conduct law enforcement activities outside of a municipality, a second class borough must form a service area.
6. Law enforcement activities have been successfully provided by contract in other communities in the USA and could be a cheaper and less complicated way to address the community crime and drug problems.
7. When comparing how local municipalities have addressed law enforcement, the committee determined that an agency similar in size to the Seward police department, minus their jail, would be suitable for our community needs. This includes about 9 officers and a budget of around \$1.8 million for 24 hour coverage.
8. A law enforcement agency is expensive to start up and will require significant resources to maintain. This will require an increase in community taxes. The committee attempted to find a solution that would minimize this cost and determined that a service area funded with a

1.5mil would generate around \$2.2 million. The committee would like to note that none of our committee members were thrilled with the idea of increased taxes.

9. The committee used the failed 2004-10 law enforcement service area ordinance as a starting point to create a new ordinance.
10. The new ordinance necessary to create a service area is in its final stages towards presenting to the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly. The ordinance is still being reviewed by Collete Thompson, KPB attorney. There have been changes in code and borough ordinances since the 2004-10 ordinance and it has taken longer to finish than anticipated. The final ordinance version will be provided to the Nikiski Community Council when it is complete.
11. The final ordinance is to be introduced to the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly by Nikiski Representative Wayne Ogle.

Respectfully Submitted

Fred A Miller
President – North Peninsula Community Council