

## **Assembly on 2017-03-21 6:00 PM**

Meeting Time: 03-21-17 18:00

### **eComments Report**

#### **Tonia Blumer**

Location:

Submitted At: 12:47am 03-22-17

Dear assembly members,

The Kenai Peninsula Borough has citizens with diverse religious beliefs and the invocation ordinance as it stands alienates a chunk of population you are expected to represent. I am appalled at the time, effort and money already spent on this issue and foresee even more expenses related to this in our future. I believe assembly meetings can be opened with a moment of silence or nothing at all.

Thank you for your time,  
Tonia Blumer

#### **Carol Cooper**

Location:

Submitted At: 12:25am 03-22-17

I have been a resident of the Kenai Peninsula Borough for 36 years. I was a registered nurse in the local hospital here in Soldotna, and have now retired. I love being a resident of the Kenai Peninsula. I have no desire to live anywhere else. For many of the years that I have lived here, the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly meetings have had a prayer, called an invocation, given at the openings of the Borough Assembly meetings. This prayer was to ask for the blessing, help, wisdom, and support of God for the Assembly members, elected by the people, as they made the decisions required as leaders in this area of Alaska. I would be very sad to see this blessing done away with. I realize that there are other definitions for the word "invocation" in the dictionary, but I prefer the definition as the prayer to our Creator God as He has the power to answer those prayers. I want to see the prayers continue as done by the clergy of this area. I believe that prayer is important to the success and blessing of the Kenai Peninsula, as well as preserving religious freedom here and in all of Alaska.

Thank You,  
Carol Cooper

#### **Jacqueline McDonough**

Location:

Submitted At: 11:28pm 03-21-17

As a KPB resident and taxpayer, I strongly support this ordinance for two reasons.

I am a member of a Christian denomination that has at certain times and places in history been the dominant (and intolerant) force in political life and at other times and places been a persecuted minority. This ordinance provides for a separation of church and state that protects my rights and the rights of others outside my faith community to worship as we see fit without the commingling of government. While I support the right of assembly members to pray or meditate on their own as they discern how to proceed on difficult questions, I cannot abide by the notion that their elected position allows them to dictate or impose their religious preferences on their constituents at the start of each meeting. I encourage you to pray (please do!), but do not do it from your government dais on the public's time.

Second, I support the ordinance as a mother of three children in our public schools. Parents across the borough are asked daily to provide services and supplies and money to make up for shortfalls in school funding, and we

come through for the kids: volunteering in the classroom, sending in boxes of pencils and paper and even food, and fundraising our hearts out. It is distressing to think that we work so hard to fund education for the next generation, and yet the assembly is willing to blithely appropriate a large chunk of change for lawyers to defend misguided invocation rules. That does not look like fiscal or religious conservatism as much as it looks like sanctimony on the backs of the taxpayers.

I hope you will open your hearts to this plea, and yes, I will keep you in my prayers as you put this conflict in the rear-view mirror and continue with your good work and public service!

**Julia Person**

Location:

Submitted At: 10:11pm 03-21-17

I support ending the invocation. This issue is a waste of time and money and we have more important issues to spend taxpayer money on.

**Brandy McGee**

Location:

Submitted At: 9:50pm 03-21-17

Many in favor of invocation state, "This is the way we have done things for 30 years." I can't help but be thankful our medical professionals don't operate with this mindset. Often times, there is a better way to do business. Limiting those able to give an invocation is blatant religious discrimination, which is illegal. In this tenuous fiscal climate pursuing illegal religious discrimination as a policy is an irresponsible decision. The assembly really does have bigger fish to fry. I would appreciate the borough eliminating the invocation and moving forward with the more pressing issues at hand. I strongly support resolution 2017-02, and thank Assembly Member Willy Dunne for bringing it forward.

**Billeen Carlson**

Location:

Submitted At: 9:50pm 03-21-17

**Amendment I**

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;..."

Either get rid of it or open it up to everyone. The government belongs to us all. Your Christian God does not.

**Tamara Schmidt**

Location:

Submitted At: 9:45pm 03-21-17

This has been an interesting emotional discussion at many tables throughout the borough.

I believe the only prudent way forward is to eliminate the religious invocation from our borough meetings for the reasons stated in the ordinance.

Also, I believe in the time honored United States Constitutional intent to keep government affairs separate from religious affairs.

A respectful moment of silence would allow people to invoke blessings in a way honoring all of those present and our laws.

**Ingrid Abrahamson**

Location:

Submitted At: 9:39pm 03-21-17

I support this ordinance to end invocation during assembly meetings. It is the only just and fiscally responsible way forward for the Borough in addressing the contentious issue of government sponsored prayer. Saving taxpayer money and ending institutionalized religious discrimination at borough assembly meetings is in the best interest of all Borough residents.

**David Phillips**

Location:

Submitted At: 8:51pm 03-21-17

As a citizen and taxpayer, I strongly oppose the ordinance amending KPB 22.40.080 and repealing KPB 22.40.090 which provides for an invocation during assembly meetings.

The time honored tradition of prayer, or anything having to do with our religious heritage when it comes to Government, has been under systematic assault for the past 60 years by the ACLU in the name of Separation of Church and State. This country and its Government has never been separate from religious belief. It's ingrained in every Constitutional document written by our forefathers and was never meant to be separated from "state", until the ACLU and liberal Progressives found the courts and threat of lawsuits as a means to forcefully separate them. It's always amazed me that the only religion under fire by that Communist supported non-profit is the Christian religion, and all that the ACLU has to do is mention a law suit to get state, local and federal governments roll over to fall in step with its Politically Correct ideology. Politically Correctness has nothing to do with right, it has everything to do with control. This Assembly needs to stand up for this country's religious heritage and quit being bullied by the ACLU, and every non-Christian liberal progressive who supports it. In closing, I would ask that the Borough Assembly and Mayor stand up, do what's right, and continue supporting invocations at our government meetings and other functions by not voting for this ordinance.

**laura patty**

Location:

Submitted At: 8:37pm 03-21-17

The invocation policies have taken up WAY TOO MUCH TIME of the assembly members. They have far more important issues to discuss!! It has also caused divisions within communities instead of unifying people. Lastly, in light of the lawsuit filed against the Borough regarding their invocation policy I am FIRMLY OPPOSED to spending hard earned tax dollars and time defending a religious based policy.

I support resolution 2017-02.

Thank you,  
Laura Patty

**Wayne Aderhold**

Location:

Submitted At: 7:58pm 03-21-17

We do have a "public religion" in this country. Religion is infused in our constitution in the form of basic fairness and human decency. The founding fathers consciously avoided any sectarian influence and established a secular form of government. As James Madison declared:

"Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other Religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians, in exclusion of all other Sects?"

I respectfully request you to see Ordinance 2017-02 not as a defeat, but as an honorable retreat from a position that may have been much less controversial in years past but now amounts to tyranny in the eyes of an apparent minority. Our Borough can no longer afford this division.

**Donna Hayes**

Location:

Submitted At: 7:58pm 03-21-17

We support the invocation during borough meetings.  
Bill and Donna Hayes

**Nancy Lord**

Location:

Submitted At: 7:04pm 03-21-17

I support this ordinance to end having invocations at borough meetings. This has been a divisive and costly issue. As a borough resident, I don't need or desire any religious content at my public meetings. Neither do I want to pay for lawsuits challenging unconstitutional actions. End the invocations and get down to the actual business of borough governance. Thank you.

**Lance Hunt**

Location:

Submitted At: 6:31pm 03-21-17

I am in full support of doing away with the invocation. It will allow the assembly to just get down to business. The current discriminatory system is unacceptable.

**Mary Lou Kelsey**

Location:

Submitted At: 5:59pm 03-21-17

Please end the controversial invocations at our KPB Assembly meetings. The current policy is restrictive in who can participate in invocations and is very divisive. I feel the invocation is unnecessary in conducting the important business of the KPB Assembly. Please support Ordinance 2017-02 and end spending valuable time and money defending a religious based policy.

**Amber Wheat**

Location:

Submitted At: 5:54pm 03-21-17

I support the invocation during assembly meetings.

**Dale Walaszek**

Location:

Submitted At: 10:29am 03-21-17

To: Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly

This letter is in regards to the amendment to repeal the invocation given before assembly meetings, due to "emotional divisions in our community and may result in significant costs to the borough" with the objective "to save the borough taxpayers money especially during this time of economic difficulties in Alaska, and reduce divisiveness in our community".

I strongly oppose this amendment to remove invocations, for the reasons contained within this letter.

Invocations at government assemblies are a time honored tradition going back to our early days of colonial history. Invocations were conducted before, during, and after the development of the Constitution of the United States, during times of great adversity, and before the branches of legislative, judicial, and executive sessions at every level of government to the present day. Prayers have been, and continue to be, given in the military particularly before, during, and after battle. To repeal invocations before our local government assemblies, is to turn our backs on this important tradition, one that is deeply woven into the fabric of our history leading to the present day.

Our nation has struggled through many "emotional divisions", yet emotions are not a foundation of good reasoning to abandon our founding precepts, virtues, and traditions. Our history demonstrates respect for a belief in a supernatural involvement in the determination and successes of individuals, our society, and our nation as a whole, particularly while facing great difficulties.

In regards to the principles of "saving money of Borough taxpayers", I reflect upon the memories of many women and men of our past, who have tolerated extreme physical and mental hardships, sacrificed greatly in material possession, up to and including giving their lives, in effort to secure and protect the principles of our nation. One nation, under God.

Whether or not you individually believe in God's divine hand in the development and sustainability of our society, not one of us can deny the power faith has had, or continues to have, in the free gift of grace many of us in the community share for no other reason than love of thy neighbor. None of us can deny the power of faith through which many find strength to overcome our weaknesses, in efforts to overcome vice, addictions, and to avoid corruption.

My encouragement to the Borough Mayor, and each Assembly Member, is not to vote for further dismantling of



the essential principles designed to a well ordered and lawful society. I encourage you to respond in an entirely different direction. I ask you to call for a "Kenai Peninsula day of Humility, Fasting, and Prayer" in effort for us to reflect upon our transgressions, heal these divisions, and move forth with a renewed sense of virtue as our guide through these difficult times of political strife and economic hardship. May God help us all, for without God, our society will surely fail.

Respectfully,

Dale R. Walaszek  
Kasilof, Alaska

"I am sure that never was a people, who had more reason to acknowledge a Divine interposition in their affairs, than those of the United States; and I should be pained to believe that they have forgotten that agency, which was so often manifested during our Revolution, or that they failed to consider the omnipotence of that God who is alone able to protect them."

"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morals are indispensable supports...Let it simply be asked, 'Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice?' And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar stature, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."  
George Washington

"Bad men cannot make good citizens. It is when a people forget God that tyrants forge their chains. A vitiated state of morals, a corrupted public conscience, is incompatible with freedom. No free government, or the blessings of liberty, can be preserved to any people but by a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality, and virtue; and by a frequent recurrence to fundamental principles."  
Patrick Henry

"Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."  
John Adams

"[I]f we and our posterity reject religious instruction and authority, violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality, and recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us, that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity."  
Daniel Webster

### **Karen West**

Location:  
Submitted At: 6:35am 03-21-17

I am in support of the removal of an invocation during the Borough Assembly meetings. Please keep religion and government separate in accordance with the laws of this country. The lawsuit should be closed due to its waste of time and money.  
Thank You

### **Louie Flora**

Location:  
Submitted At: 5:53am 03-21-17

I support Ordinance 2017-02. A moment of silence, or a moment of good guitar music (Chuck Berry) instead of an invocation will not adversely impact the quality of the job our KPB Assembly does.

### **Jack Grossl**

Location:  
Submitted At: 2:25am 03-21-17

I support the Invocation Prayer!

### **Tasha Grossl**

Location:  
Submitted At: 1:51am 03-21-17

I support the invocation prayer!

### **Richard Baker**

Location:  
Submitted At: 1:30am 03-21-17

I support the Invocation Prayer!

### **Marc Grober**

Location:  
Submitted At: 10:54pm 03-20-17

While many in Alaska would be happy to have the Satanic Temple provide a regular invocation, and while Kenai DOES have a reputation for being one of the three centers of ignorance and intolerance in the State, I think it would go quite a ways to demonstrating how level-headed and rational the wonderful people on the Peninsula are if the invocation was simply done away with. The invocation, like the appendix, is a vestigial reminder that while people "of faith" are entitled to their beliefs, they are not entitled to their own facts. Today, insisting that an inflamed appendix remain in a child's body because it was intended to be there would be grounds to remove the child from the custody of any adult insane enough to argue that. If you have Assembly members who wish to be known to ask invisible aliens for favors, while that is unfortunate, I see no reason to make matters worse by pacifying them with ceremonial opportunities for them to engage in such behavior.

Today, we see many argue that gun deaths are attributable to inadequate mental health, not to the density of gun ownership. That could very well be the case, and if it is, that truly begs the question of what "mental health" means. You have people in your community who believe that supernatural forces that they communicate with control the behavior of your residents. I submit that anyone who engages in such a system of beliefs and behavior would, by any rational authority, be regarded as mentally ill. Where then do we draw the line? The simple fact of the matter is that most who support gun ownership would also agree that fundamentalist gun owners are there biggest concern. Of course, what few really want to acknowledge is most of the fundamentalists are the people promoting invocations...

No, I am not from your Borough; I am not a constituent. But your approach to this issue effects how everyone in Alaska is perceived. I am reminded of a recent interview of a woman who was ecstatic over the fact that her son, now eligible for "TrumpCare" (the ACA having been repealed), was gushing over how wonderful the provisions of the law were. Yes, many think that woman would fit right in on the Peninsula, and together with some of the folk in North Pole and Wassila, paint a picture of Alaskans as Far North Morons, the Arctic Reach of the Maroon Tide. Every thinking Alaskan will heave a huge sigh of relief when the Assembly decides that it has no need to be tied to such an identity.

Of course, "the petty and ungodly atheist" might argue a further reason to do away with the invocation, something I suppose is promoted by Pat Robertson. I mean, as bad as things have been on the Peninsula, one might posit that the gods are already ticked off at you folk, and that what could it hurt if you did away with the invocation to see if things got better or worse? If you then suddenly have an outbreak of forehead rash wherein the words "pray" appear, then you can always change direction.

### **Kevin Walker**

Location:  
Submitted At: 10:35pm 03-20-17

Before every borough meeting, the Pledge of Allegiance is recited. That pledge ends with "one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." That's enough religion for many of us that believe government time should be spent governing. And it even provides justice for all, not just those that pass certain discriminating

tests.

Please get back to Borough business.

**Dale Banks**

Location:

Submitted At: 5:02pm 03-20-17

I support this ordinance to remove the invocation from the agenda. The invocation amounts to mandated, scheduled religious indoctrination during a government meeting which I find reprehensible, potentially discriminatory, and counter productive.

**Josh Smith**

Location:

Submitted At: 2:31pm 03-20-17

Assembly members,

Please do not remove from our Assembly meetings the acknowledgement of God's authority.

Sincerely,

Josh Smith

Kenai

**Kathryn Carssow**

Location:

Submitted At: 8:02pm 03-19-17

Dear Assembly President Kelly Cooper and Assembly Members,

Thank you for your hard work and commitment to our communities.

I am writing to urge you to vote 'yes' on ordinance 2017-02 to repeal invocations before assembly meetings. I feel strongly that the invocation policy is at cross purposes with the good intentions of the Assembly to bring the community and yourselves together in a place of mutual respect and commitment to a higher good. It has become a lightning rod for intolerance that antagonizes deeply held dissenting emotions in a way that is unproductive and distracts from the important business before you during these trying times of budget cuts and serious threats to our economies, schools, environment and way of life here on the peninsula. Please bring a close to this waste of money, emotions and energy by passing ordinance 2017-02 and move on to tackling the challenging and pertinent matters before you.

Thanks again for your service to our community.

Kathryn L. Carssow

Homer, Alaska

**Jim Reiser**

Location:

Submitted At: 4:51am 03-19-17

If you are unable to leave your mythology when you step into your government position, you should not be allowed to hold your position. You are a representative of the people, not a preacher, and if you are going to act like a preacher, maybe you should step down from your government position and work for a church or other religious organization. I'm looking at you, Stan Welles! This country was founded on the freedom of AND FROM religion, and through your invocation policy, it is extremely obvious you are using your power to further your beliefs and silence anyone who does not share them. Then, when the assembly is represented in the newspaper saying "electorate would absolutely insist upon an Assembly that strongly supported prayer to the Lord our God who blessed us with our Republic" while explicitly stating christianity, is absolutely, unquestionably favoring one religion over others. The fact that you can't see how unconstitutional this is astounds me and legitimately causes me to question your competence.

**Deborah Poore**

Location:

Submitted At: 8:27pm 03-18-17

The clear solution to the question of Invocation at Public Meetings, in my opinion is to have a Minute of Silence when each person is free to silently follow their conscience. I support Kelly Cooper and Willie Dunne in their

position. I feel strongly that we are a country founded on religious freedom. Public governmental meetings should not favor one religious viewpoint over any other.

**Charlie Gibson**

Location:

Submitted At: 8:16pm 03-18-17

I support Willie Dunne and Kelly Cooper's position. I think that it is vital that the assembly not be in the business of deciding what MY religion is or isn't. Thank you for all the work that you do.

**Chris Morgan**

Location:

Submitted At: 5:15am 03-18-17

To say that I am disappointed with 6 members of this assembly would be an understatement. At a time when government spending is out of control, the PFD was stolen by greedy politicians, and there is talk about adding an income tax, tripling gasoline tax and boosting stud tax from \$5 to \$75/tire, you are intentionally wasting taxpayer money on a lawsuit instead of doing away with the invocation.

The \$50k you earmarked for legal defense is almost double what was cut from road maintenance in the 2017 budget. Is discrimination really almost twice as important as our roads? It cost every man, woman and child on the peninsula 87c, whether they wanted to contribute to the lawsuit or not. It could have been used for the Katchemak Emergency Services as their entire yearly budget. Better yet, \$5.69 extra dollars could be spent per student in the public schools. But no....you are spending this money to defend your bigoted, misogynistic, hatemongering religion. One which, according to my research, over 70% of your constituents do not share. Furthermore, you hired the Alliance Defending Freedom, to the tune of almost \$20k. Since you didn't seem to do any reading up on them, let me fill you in. They widely regarded as a hate group due to their anti-homosexual and anti-women's rights agenda. Is this how you want to be recognized to the public? Wasting taxpayer money on discrimination is one thing, but wasting taxpayer money on discrimination while supporting a hate group is a completely unacceptable!

While I'm at it, why is the assembly posting articles in the local news asking us to insist on a christian invocation and explicitly stating that the constitution is based on the bible, "the lord our god" blessing us with our country and our rights are endowed by "our creator"? Ignoring the part where the constitution was NOT based on the bible, your creator is not everyone's creator, especially for those of us who do not believe in a creator. By saying that, you are telling the people who do not share your mythology do not matter, and to say that the forceful, violent slaughter of the native americans by the europeans was your god blessing us by giving us their land is despicable.

**Linda Munns**

Location:

Submitted At: 9:42pm 03-17-17

It seems to me that a moment of silence prior to the meetings would provide ALL believers an opportunity to meet that spiritual need without conflict. Separation of church and state, please, by ending the invocation. Thank you for your time.

**Rhonda Ecker**

Location:

Submitted At: 7:45pm 03-17-17

Hi,

I feel the vote should be yes on Ordinance 2017-02. This issue has caused division among the community. I believe it is wrong to only approve certain religious groups. I certainly don't want my tax dollars spent on lawsuits over this.

I believe an intelligent solution would be to have a moment of silence. People can pray to whomever/whatever they choose, and those that don't want to...don't have to.

**Lani Raymond**

Location:

Submitted At: 7:45pm 03-16-17

As a Borough resident, I urge you to end the Invocation at your meetings. I will list four reasons.



\*An Invocation is not necessary.

\*The method you use to select who shall be allowed to lead the Invocation is not fair to all the citizens in our Borough, and it is in fact unconstitutional to exclude some religious groups in favor of others.

\*The Borough does not have enough extra money to pay for defending this selection process--which is unfair and unconstitutional and unneeded—this money is sorely needed elsewhere!

\*Fighting this on-going, distracting battle means a great deal of lost time would be far better devoted to the other necessary, important work that the Borough should be doing.

If, however, you feel there should be something at the beginning of the meeting, a minute of silence would be fine with me. Each of us could collect our own thoughts, pray if we wish, or just have a minute to contemplate the meeting to come. It would be absolutely fair, absolutely free, and the Borough could get on with their essential work.

### **Roberta Coffey**

Location:

Submitted At: 1:04am 03-15-17

Please end the invocation, it has caused more divisiveness and taken time away from more important needs. Thank you for your time and effort as Councilman, your time is appreciated. A simple moment of silence would be more appropriate yours truly Robbie Coffey Homer Alaska

### **Dave Lyon**

Location:

Submitted At: 12:58am 03-15-17

For goodness sakes people, could we please get on with governing? This ridiculous issue has gone on long enough. An invocation is simply not important. Do away with it entirely and let the issue go.

The amount of time and money being wasted on this absurd topic is an embarrassment. The entire assembly should be ashamed of themselves.

### **Dotti Harness-Foster**

Location:

Submitted At: 3:26pm 03-14-17

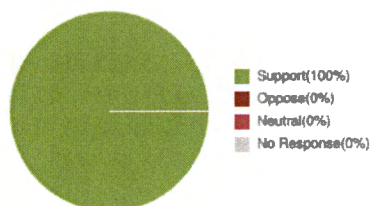
Assembly members,

Please support Ord. 17-02 to eliminate the invocations at KPB meeting. This will save money and reduce divisiveness in our community.

Rick Foster and Dotti Harness-Foster

Agenda Item: eComments for 6. 2017-04 An Ordinance Authorizing the Sale of Certain Parcels of Borough Land by Sealed Bid Followed by an Over-the-Counter Sale (Mayor)

### Overall Sentiment



### **Katherine Becher**

Location:

Submitted At: 2:24am 03-17-17