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December 2, 2024

City Council  
City of Gustavus, Alaska

Dear Councilmembers:

As a Gustavus resident of more than 50 years, I want to express my strong support for using the City's Endowment Fund to compensate Ben and Donna DeBoer for making their family's homestead lands along Dock Road available to walkers. Being able to hike these lands, with their often spectacular views, is an invaluable asset that makes our community a better place to live and visit. They are an attractive location where folks can safely walk with friends and with their dogs. (Walking along roadsides in Gustavus can be perilous, as the road shoulders are narrow or nonexistent.) Moreover, the DeBoer lands support substantial populations of birds, especially migrating ducks and geese, and the flowers, especially the lupine and fireweed are beautiful (not to mention the tasty strawberries that people gather).

Except in the worst of weather, there are almost always people walking the perhaps two miles of trails that have developed in the area. On Thanksgiving afternoon this year, the weather was clear and brisk, but there was little wind, and at one point probably 20 people were out walking. People of all ages—from folks in their 80s to mothers carrying babies—enjoy and benefit from the walk. Dogs, too, are huge beneficiaries.

Importantly, compensating Ben and Donna DeBoer will hold these important lands open for public use while the Southeast Alaska Land Trust raises funds for an eventual buyout that will incorporate conservation easements that will benefit Gustavus in perpetuity.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jim Mackovjak