

Gustavus City Council

This letter is written in opposition to the request by the Conservation Lands Advisory Committee for an Endowment Fund Grant to fund their “Gustavus Natural Lands Lease Project” (Project). The project, per the last application request I read, was dated 2024-1030 and the requested amount was \$25,000.

The Project would create a temporary 2 year conservation easement (CE) or sometimes referred to as a lease for the lands now owned by Ben DeBoer. From the application request, I do not see any indication there is a MOU between the Project and Ben. It appears this grant will provide funding for the initial 2 year CE of a 5 year CE. Additional years of lease payments (if needed) will be requested an/or negotiated after the first 2 year period, and contingent on funding availability from various sources. What sources?

The 5 year temporary CE of the property will allow the Project and partners time to investigate, pursue, and obtain funding while protecting the land from near term sale or development. Is the rush for this EFG to prevent Ben from selling his property? The temporary CE will be held by the Southeast Alaska Land Trust (SEALT) for the benefit of the community of Gustavus. The EFG is providing CE payments, legal review, Baseline Documentation Report, Title work, GIS, project planning, monitoring, stewardship, enforcement, and property access/use signs. And, The Gustavus Natural Lands Lease Project is not certain it will be able to find funding to complete the project.

The Gustavus Natural Lands Lease Project is an idea that should have started by understanding the funding availability for this project. Then having a long discussion with Ben DeBoer regarding his expectations. Then listen to public comment regarding this Project. The EFG Grant Application should have waited until there was a reasonable beginning and end of the project timeline.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Jim Martell