

From: [Melanie Heacox](#)
To: [Liesl Barker](#)
Subject: Endowment Funds
Date: Thursday, December 12, 2024 16:14:18

Liesl Barker

City Clerk, City of Gustavus, Alaska

Dear Liesl,

Would you please forward this to the City Council prior to the Monday, Dec. 16th meeting. Thank you, Melanie Heacox

Date: Dec. 12, 2024
To: Gustavus City Council
From: Melanie Heacox, writing as a Gustavus resident
Re: A proposed two-year conservation lease with SEALT

I strongly encourage the Gustavus City Council to apportion the nearly \$15,000 of unallocated Endowment funds towards the SEALT two-year conservation lease. During this timeframe the City of Gustavus and SEALT can work together towards developing a long-term plan to protect the DeBoer lands for the future enjoyment of all Gustavus residents and visitors.

Open spaces for public enjoyment are dwindling globally: 80% of the world's land surface (outside of Antarctica which is 98% covered in ice) has been altered by humans. But here in Gustavus, the public has enjoyed years of berry picking, birding and many other recreational activities on these lands, all through the gracious permission of the family owners. The sweeping open natural landscape with views of the Fairweather Range makes for an outstanding gateway to Gustavus for visitors arriving by ferry. We can't take for granted that these valuable properties will forever remain undeveloped and available for public enjoyment.

This two-year lease is a necessary first step towards protection in perpetuity. I believe this is an excellent use of endowment funds because these lands are ecologically valuable and recreationally important. Furthermore, they are used by a very high percentage of local residents throughout the seasons. If one day we look out on these treasured and shared public lands and see businesses, houses and "No Trespassing" signs, we'll wish we had taken this opportunity more seriously.

For that reason, I encourage the City Council to take the initiative and adjust the endowment allocation to fully fund the SEALT effort for the next two years. Gustavus is one of the fastest growing communities in Alaska. As our population grows, so will the pressure to develop. Let's protect this rare and precious open space. Our children, future families and visitors will thank us for our vision and stewardship.

With appreciation,

Melanie Heacox

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