

December 14, 2024

Gustavus City Council,

The upcoming vote on Agenda Items #7 and #10 granting Endowment Fund monies to the Conservation Lands Committee for expenses related to the DeBoer properties land trust, are of concern to many in the community. Council's Scoping Document (#9) adds additional concern. The Endowment Fund was not created to preserve private lands. Those grants are for community members' community projects, but this year's projects have been shorted due to this Conservation Lands Committee request. Unfortunately, the criteria has blurred over the past several years with regard to Endowment Fund granting. If you read the Scoping Document (#9) closely, you will see that Endowment Fund grants will be required over the next several years for this project. You will also read that this project will require a paid employee position, which will undoubtedly require City funding.

Posted committee minutes show SE Alaska Land Trust (SEALT) as a possible "caretaker" (my words) in this project. Their website states: *SEALT is a non-profit dedicated to ensuring cultural and historic areas continue to thrive and respectfully acknowledges the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian peoples as the original owners and inhabitants of S.E. Alaska.* At least three times in the past 30 years, this community has strongly objected to the formation of a Borough that includes Gustavus and outlying communities. Would SEALT possibly aid in the acquisition of the property by a corporation which is already trying to encircle our community? The Nature Conservancy was supposed to "protect" land along our beach and elsewhere 25 years ago, and yet they secretly met with the City of Hoonah in an effort to give that property to Hoonah.

Alaska Dept. of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, developed a survey in 2005 or 2006, seeking input from the community on "wants and needs" for the newly incorporated city. It became the first "Strategic Plan". I read of no desire for the City to add additional land to its "portfolio," in that original Strategic Plan. In the 2017 Sentenium survey now on the City website, there are 80-some pages of questions again seeking the will of the majority of residents here on various issues. The 2017 Sentenium report lists no comment regarding community members' desire to increase the City land holdings.

In closing:

- Community members with projects, applying for Endowment Funds, are the only eligible participants for grants from the Endowment Fund.
- The Conservation Lands Committee should not receive a grant from the Endowment Fund, let alone funding for the entire "project" as some would insist.
- The Conservation Lands Committee should not have council members serving *and voting* on committee projects who then vote a second time on those same projects at a City Council meeting. If there aren't enough outside people for the committee, maybe there shouldn't be a committee.

Please read this into the Public Record.

Sandi Marchbanks