

ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD

Verbal Testimony Summaries

Cordova Public Hearing 11/1/2021

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Jeff Bailey | 1 |
| Nancy Bird | 2 |
| Kristin Carpenter..... | 3 |
| William Deaton..... | 4 |
| Jennie Grimwood..... | 5 |
| Helen Howarth | 6 |
| Clay Koplín | 7 |
| Sylvia Lange..... | 8 |

ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD COMMUNITY PUBLIC HEARING VERBAL TESTIMONY SUMMARY

Cordova 11/1/21 Verbal Testimony

Summary Date: 11/4/2021

Name: **Jeff Bailey**

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

Jeff Bailey is a 40+ year resident in Cordova and has seen Cordova being passed around to many districts that needed more population without fair representation. Jeff understands that the board is searching for populations to fill others. His contention is that there are two neighborhoods in Spenard that have had more representation than Cordova. Their connection with coastal communities is strong. Southeast Alaska is too far away. Native groups are culturally different. There may be fishery resources and ferry issues shared, but the Gulf of Alaska is a huge barrier in being able to share resources there. It is a good point to bring up that the commercial fishing has come up this year having the third highest amount the state has ever seen. When the fish are being delivered, some go to Cordova, Seward, Kodiak, Valdez, and Whittier. Valdez is a large seafood producer now. Silver Bay is well over a 2-million pound capacity and Peter Pan's production has also grown. Their connection with the PWS communities and the fisheries is where Cordova should stay. Whittier should be districted with Cordova as they travel through Whittier, their ferry system is through Whittier, and much of their seafood goes through Whittier. Cordova does dispatch for Whittier and Girdwood. His perfect map would be a Kodiak/PWS district where Seward, Whittier, Valdez, and Kodiak are one. The road to the interior is getting shorter, not longer. It used to go up to Mile 54, now it goes up to Mile 32.

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Name: **Nancy Bird**

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

Nancy is in favor of Cordova remaining coastal. Being in the interior was "nightmare-ish" as there were no socio-economic ties with the Delta Junction and Tok. Even though the newly proposed maps do not propose this type of connection, Cordova would not share much in common with the villages. Nancy did like when Valdez has been excluded from Cordova. Nancy likes being with Kodiak as this has been a good fit. Nancy is concerned about the Anchorage districts where 3 democrats have been placed into the same district in both Board Maps v.3 and v.4. There are other seemingly gerrymandering issues in Fairbanks and Juneau. Nancy is concerned about the direction that is being taken. There are some growing ties with some in the Copper River area, but there are not many socio-economic connections overall.

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Name: **Kristin Carpenter**

Affiliation: **PWS Economic Dev. District (Executive Director) but speaking on behalf of self**

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

Kristin is in favor of keeping Cordova in a district that includes as many Prince William Sound (PWS) communities as possible. Cordova has a maritime economy which is something they have in common with Kodiak. Although there is a connection by the Copper River up to the interior, regarding transportation, there will always have a tension between discussing the ferry system and surface road issues; these two do not align well. Harbor infrastructure is also a big issue for all coastal communities. PWS and Cordova also has the following in common: - Ferry system - Schools and teams play in the same leagues - Tourism, shares same tourist traffic Cordova prefers to be in a district with Kodiak, then southeast, then the interior. There is a map that has Fox River north of Homer (a few hundred people) that were looped into District 5-C, yet Whittier was lumped in with Anchorage with only 287 people. Why not include Whittier with other PWS communities?

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Name: **William Deaton**

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

William loves that Cordova is coastal and expressed the importance of maintaining this when it comes to state representation. Cordova should be kept with Kodiak, this provides for good representation with the Alaska Marine High and commercial fisheries. Regarding the socio-economic ties, William mentioned how Valdez is on the road system where there is oil, not a high percentage of commercial fisherman, and on the opposite end, when you look at Cordova there is high commercial fishing, no road besides the marine highway, and no oil. William would like maintain this socio-economic compatibility when redistricting. Hopefully Cordova can stay with coastal Alaska as interior Alaska would not represent Cordova at all. Any effort to keep Cordova costal would be greatly appreciated. If Valdez is with Cordova, please include Whittier as well so they have the entire Prince William Sound.

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Name: **Jennifer Grimwood**

Email or Phone Contact: 

Jennifer would like Cordova to be separated from Kodiak. For the last 10 years, they've had more political power than Cordova and Cordova has not had much influence in the elections in terms of representatives. She would like to see Cordova go southeast or merge with Valdez. For 10 years, they had a district comprised of Cordova down to Craig, meandering through all the villages and this worked out well. Jennifer agreed with Sylvia Lange's comments about the history of the Cordova and the relationship with the Upper Copper River. In the 90's, Cordova was apart of Copper River and the district went all the way up to Delta. It's time for a change.

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Name: **Helen Howarth**

Affiliation: **Citizen of Cordova and City Manager**

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

Helen believes that Cordova wants to be in communities that share similar issues, this means coastal communities, communities off the road system, etc. Kodiak, Prince William Sound, and other similar regions have similar issues to Cordova. They also operate as a region when they participate in the PWS economic district which meets regularly to discuss the economic issues and ways to resolve them. They already operate as a collectively to draw resources to their community to solve issues they already have. Cordova could go southeast, but not sure to what extent the impact would be. Cordova is comfortable with the representation they get with having a Kodiak representative. The community is growing and has changed by 300. Kodiak is not a competing community since they share so many things. Regarding Whittier and whether they can be involved, Helen is unsure. It may also make sense to include communities out East End Road due to the similarity in commercial fishing and there being many Russian Old Believers in Cordova. However, their allegiance is to Homer. Cordova's decision is to be politically engaged with coastal communities with similar industries as well as native traditions where there is a strong presence in Cordova. (i.e. Tatitlek-Chenega Native communities)

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Name: **Clay Koplín**

Affiliation: **City of Cordova Mayor**

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

Clay is in favor of Cordova being a coastal district as there are many commonalities with Kodiak and other coastal communities. Prince William Sound is a strong and growing fishery. There are many fishes coming in and out of Cordova as well. The fisheries connect the communities, which is 99% of their economy.

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Name: Sylvia Lange

Affiliation: Native Village of Eyak

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

Sylvia serves as Vice Chair of the Traditional Council of the Native Village of Eyak. Board Maps v.3 and v.4 appear most closely aligned with their present needs for representation. The maps include their village in District 5 and includes the Chugach villages in the Lower Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound where there are many cultural and familial ties. The boundaries are also similar to what was used in the last redistricting cycle. They have been connected to Kodiak for most of the last 10 years and the connections have been strengthened; Kodiak and Cordova have similar socio-economic links, although Kodiak is a much larger community. There are mutual fishing ties to the Suqpiq and Alutiiq populations, similar freight transportation connections, and marine highways are important for their communities. The other maps have varying deviations. AFFR map, while including many small coastal communities, stretches too far to the west for the village to feel much regional connection. The Senate Minority Caucus map separates them from all coastal communities and does not meet any of the socio-economic needs.

The AFFER map poses serious problems by separating them from all coastal communities, including Prince William Sound, and pairs them with interior Alaskan communities with which there are limited connections. The Doyon Coalition map keeps the village with Prince William Sound and includes some Chugach villages, but it separates them from Whittier, which is their AMHS connection. The map also separates them from the Copper River watershed communities, such as Chitna and Gulkana. For these reasons, the village supports Board Maps v.3 and v.4 No map links the village to Southeast Alaska and this is important to the village as they feel an affinity on several levels with the communities of Southeast Alaska, particularly the more remote and smaller coastal communities. They share cultural connections with their Tlingit relatives, especially those in Yakutat. They host cultural events and the neighbors to the south travel to the village for those events. They also share a fishery and seafood processing economic base, similar to the southeast communities. They also share the extension of the temperate rainforest that stretches from the Southern Alaska border to Prince William Sound. Transportation systems, barge lines, and Alaska Airlines flights and 61 and 66 are all shared routes for decades. They are also similarly dependent on the Alaska Marine Highway System as the only road connection to the rest of Alaska. They were previously connected to the southeast islands in years past, and it suited their needs well. A link was included to a draft map that includes Cordova with Southeast for future redistricting considerations. The link is included in an email that was sent by Sylvia.

Kodiak has been a good fit for the village and they do not prefer to be separated from Prince William Sound (PWS). Valdez is more interested in going up the highway rather than being connected to the village. There is subsistence and commercial fishing with some sport fishing, but personal use on the upper Copper can cause resource conflicts. They make their living mostly by commercial fishing and they are a small boat fishery with very few large vessels. Socio-economically, the village is connected to Kodiak, but the smaller PWS communities and the small boat fisheries have more connection with the village.

Culturally, the village can go either way as they have Sugpiaq relatives in Kodiak, Unga relatives in PWS , Tlingit relatives in Southeast Alaska. It seems as though every 10 years, they are the "red-headed step child of the redistricting process". PWS has always been their "front yard and back yard". In some ways, they do get two representatives if they go either way. They can fit either way quite comfortably. Socio-economic ties that the village has with the Copper River: - There was a railroad service service that went up to Kennecott, prior to that, it was a Native community. Then copper was discovered, then fishing. Generally, the village is a colonial community. - In pre-history times before non-Natives came to the area, there was much trade on the Copper River all the way up to Ahtna. - There was also a trade route that went behind the village on the Bremner River up to Yakutat. - Copper was highly prized in the Tlingit archipelago and they were in the middle of the trade route. - Fishing is all about PWS and Copper River Delta where there are small boats with single individuals. The village keeps an eye on the escapement on what goes up the river. This resource is a balance between subsistence, personal, and commercial fishing.