

WASILLA CITY COUNCIL INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

IM No. 99-101

Presented with: 10/25/99

SUBJECT: Correspondence

Date: _____ Verified by: JK

PREPARED BY: Administration

DATE: October 13, 1999

FOR AGENDA OF: October 25, 1999

SUMMARY:

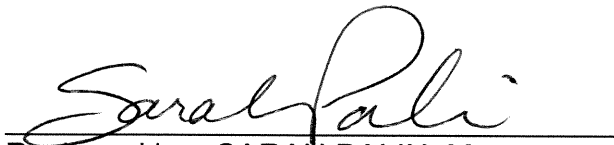
FYI:

Please see attached correspondence:

- ARRC Jim Kubitz letter re: South Church Road Extension
- Correspondence to Bruce Urban
- Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race letter re: relocation consideration

FISCAL IMPACT: X No ___ Yes, amount requested: \$ _____ Fund: _____

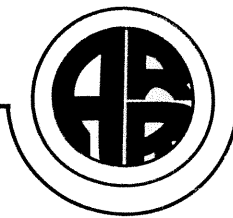
RECOMMENDED ACTION: FYI



Reviewed by: SARAH PALIN, Mayor

Attachments: Jim Kubitz, ARRC letter
Bruce Urban letter
Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race letter

ALASKA RAILROAD CORPORATION



Corporate Address: P.O. Box 107500, Anchorage, Alaska 99510
327 W. Ship Creek Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99501

September 29, 1999

Sarah Palin, Mayor
City of Wasilla
290 E. Herning Avenue
Wasilla, Alaska 99654-7091

RECEIVED
OCT 07 1999
CITY OF WASILLA, ALASKA

Re: South Church Road Extension

Dear Mayor Palin:

Recently we discussed our mutual plans for development in the Wasilla area. As you know, ARRC is aggressively pursuing roadbed and track improvements to support our increase in passenger services. At some point in the future we expect to develop commuter rail service from Wasilla to Anchorage and the Anchorage International Airport as well as to Girdwood.

Wasilla is central to our plans to develop a new equipment "barn" for our commuter equipment and maintenance facility for our track crews. Your plan of developing the South Church Road extension and offer of providing sufficient land for our needs solves a number of challenges for us. Our current track section facility located in downtown Wasilla no longer serves the need of ARRC and has become an impediment to your plans of building a more attractive tourist environment. The new South Church Road location may be appropriate for our facility and will be less visible from the Parks Highway than our current facility.

While ARRC's primary commuter station will be located at the Parks and Glenn Highway interchange, we will be housing our equipment in the Wasilla area overnight. ARRC currently plans on stationing crews in Wasilla when we start our commuter service. In addition, we will be doing minor repairs and servicing of the commuter railcars during the evening when trains are not running. This will require us to have a small maintenance shed capable of housing up to four pieces of equipment and minor maintenance equipment. Again, the South Church Road extension appears to be an ideal location for this facility.

I want to reiterate my support for this project. We look forward to working with your staff to fully develop this program.

Sincerely,


Jim Kubitz

Vice President, Real Estate and Project Planning



CITY OF WASILLA

290 E HERNING AVENUE
WASILLA AK 99654-9050
PHONE: (907) 373-9050
FAX: (907) 373-9092

October 13, 1999

Bruce Urban
Recreational Services Manager
Matanuska-Susitna Borough
350 East Bahlia Ave.
Palmer, AK 99645-6488

Mr. Urban:

One of the greatest economic puzzles facing the City of Wasilla as well as the borough, is how to stop the trains. For years, trains with over one million summer tourist travel through the city and the borough every year without stopping or shopping. If it were possible to stop these trains, for just one hour, the economic impact will be significant.

The City of Wasilla is doing just that. With the commercial rezone of an undeveloped area of the City and a site plan for a new tourism destination, tentatively called "Iditarod Village," the city will convert a series of large undeveloped parcels into an international tourism attraction adjacent to the railroad track and the Parks Highway. The anchor tenants have already agreed and quality retail partners are lining up.

Phase I - Relocation of the Iditarod Headquarters and construction of a related retail facility to this new site set the tone. Development of the new Iron Dog Classic headquarters log building and retail outlet help nail down the other corner. The decision of the Alaska Railroad to move the log Wasilla Railroad Station to this site ensures the trains will stop. These are the cornerstones of this new project. Add to that up to 25 quality retail outlets all built under strict architectural standards, controlled by the City of Wasilla Planning Commission, ensure retail diversity, esthetic integrity, and economic success. Phase II includes development of a hotel and convention center tied in to the same esthetic and architectural presentation.

What we need is a Master Plan.

Since this project will not only benefit the citizens of the greater Wasilla area, but also the borough through jobs, creation of new businesses, retention of profit in the local economy, off-site economic impacts and retail dollar turnover, this is a perfect project for this grant.

Project Name: Iditarod Village Master Plan
Sponsor: City of Wasilla
Address: 290 E. Herning Ave., Wasilla, AK 99654-7091
Sponsor's Representative: Ric Davidge
Phone: Daytime: 373-9045 Evening 892-7224
Project Location: see attached map
Describe Project: see above discussion
Projected Cost: \$50,000.00

This project will provide significant economic benefits to the borough by attracting new visitors and their money. It will enhance a project under development by the City of Wasilla. Land has already been acquired and over \$200, 000 in road and trail development has been completed or is underway.

This project will have no impact on borough maintenance and operation costs. It also have significant financial support from the Iditarod, Iron Dog Classic, the Alaska Railroad Corporation, and the City of Wasilla. Volunteers from the City's Youth Court and summer programs will be heavily involved in site beautification and maintenance once the project is constructed.

Upon receipt of the funds requested, the intention is to offer the Master Plan project through a RFP and award the work this winter.

Mayor Sarah Palin
City of Wasilla

Attachments:



Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race®

P.O. Box 870800 • Wasilla, Alaska 99687-0800
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VIA FACSIMILE 907.373.9089

October 5, 1999

Mr. Ric Davidge
CITY OF WASILLA
290 East Herring Avenue
Wasilla, Alaska 99654

Dear Mr. Davidge:

As you know, the tourism industry represents an important piece of the overall economic pie to the State of Alaska. Research conducted by the Alaska Visitors Association (AVA) as well as our own Matanuska-Susitna Convention and Visitors Bureau (MSCVB), indicates some 1.3 million visitors travel to Alaska each year. Tourism is the number one growth industry in the State of Alaska and ranks second in the number of jobs. Visitors spend nearly \$1 billion directly and the average visitor dollar circulates two-and-a-half times before leaving the State, for an economic impact of \$2.6 billion each year.

Yet despite the importance of tourism, no Mat-Su Borough or City of Wasilla destination ranks among the top 25 most visited attractions in the State of Alaska. I believe that can be changed.

Having served on the board of the MSCVB and as chair of its marketing committee, I believe I have a reasonable grasp of the issues we must overcome as a community in order for us to get our arms around a bigger slice of the tourism pie. Frankly, we need to change the way non-valley residents view our community. As but one example, Frommer's, a travel guide of some note, described the Mat-Su Valley as follows: "... a place to pass through on the way somewhere else..." "... has not developed as a destination, and in some ways is less appealing that it was 20 years ago." "With an adamantly antigovernment population that prevented any community planning, the rush of development that occurred turned the lovely meadows and rolling hills of birch into the worst kind of suburban sprawl of highway-fronting shopping malls and gravel lots."

Mr. Ric Davidge
October 5, 1999
Page 2

Changing the way a visitor views Wasilla should be a primary goal. To do so we must continue to change the way we look and feel. I believe that we can continue to do so and commend you for taking the lead in developing a vision for a well-designed City of Wasilla visitor destination.

As an organization, the Iditarod Trail Committee (ITC) would be quite interested in considering relocating its headquarters operations to land adjoining the Parks Highway. Having said that, as you can imagine, there are at least two key issues which will be important to us in moving this issue forward:

- Site plan. The most important issue to ITC will be the manner in which the site is developed, not only initially but in the future as well. We have worked hard to create an environment in which visitors enjoy the feel of a true Alaskan experience. We would need assurance that a setting distinctly featuring Iditarod Trail Headquarters will be recreated to ITC's satisfaction.
- Movement of current headquarters and checkpoint replica buildings. Our resources are tied up in staging the Iditarod in a fashion that race fans here in the state and around the world have come to expect and demand. We would need the City to provide funding for the move. Ideally, it would make sense to add on to the present structure to better accommodate the anticipated increase in the number of visitors as well to house other aspects of our operation which are presently located elsewhere.

It is our understanding that a site plan is in the process of being developed along with a project vision and illustration. We look forward to the opportunity to review it with you in the very near future.

Sincerely yours for,

THE IDITAROD TRAIL COMMITTEE, INC.



Stan Hooley
Executive Director

cc: ITC Board of Directors