



Seldovia Gazette

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Thursday, April 12, 2007

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Letters to the Editor

Letter to the Editor

Hi! I don't know if all you who read this know me but I'd like to introduce myself. I'm the Chief of Police for the City of Seldovia, a position I've held for over 27 years now. I introduce myself because I don't think I'm well known around town, or at least among the administration. In a Council meeting last night, which I did not attend, I'm told the suggestion of using the Police Department as leverage to get additional funds out of Juneau was brought up. Since the administration doesn't feel I need to be advised of such things I thought maybe you, the citizens, may not know what is going on either. The information I have is from friends who have bits and pieces of what took place so it may not be completely accurate. Because of deadlines for the Gazette I felt I had to run with what I have and make the public aware what I've been told.

I'm told the Mayor made suggestions that the Council contact the Alaska State Troopers (AST) in Juneau and inform them if a new contract with the Department of Public Safety does not show a substantial increase in revenue the Seldovia Police Department could be dissolved. Now I would think if we were to take such a desperate stance we should want to have all the facts. I have worked under that contract since its conception and have found the monetary portion of the contract to be only a small portion of what is actually provided. Now the Mayor has repeatedly attacked the AST Contract and wanted to use threats of not doing their work as a means to get more money. It is my feelings if the Police Department, or the Contract, go away we are in for a very different Seldovia. If the Alaska State Troopers (AST) were the only responding agency they would be, at best, a couple hours away and then would only respond on a priority basis. They will respond but they cover calls from Ninilchik South, with a limited staff, and that's a large populated area to serve. That, by definition, means if it's a property crime it will more than likely be quite some time before they can respond. In

a life and death matter they will come as soon as they can, weather permitting, but they are still a couple hours away. I hope a life and death crisis does not occur in the middle of the night. That would certainly complicate things. The Seldovia area would be open to all sorts of crime if there was not a Police presence. The word would get out quickly and undesirables would flock to our quite little of Secluded Charm. I receive a lot of complaints about what took place when I'm out of town for just a few days. I can only imagine what would take place if **no** Police presence were here.

The Council is responsible for providing services to the public and I would hope the safety of our citizens would be of greater importance than giving an ultimatum in writing to a revenue source. We're probably not real high on the Department of Public Safety's "Keep Happy" list. I'm well acquainted with the Department of Public Safety and they don't take threats too well. We could very well wind up trying to show them our muscle and only wind up putting out people in harms way. Somehow it doesn't make sense to me. I would have shared this, and more, with the administration had they only inquired. I'm certainly not right all the time but I'm pretty darned sure on this one. Juneau AST overloads the Peninsula Troopers all the time and adding these duties to their already hectic duties wouldn't bother the AST administration at all. There has to be a better approach than trying to threaten the people with all the money. The bully approach is not one that will be readily accepted by the Commissioner of Public Safety. Walt Monagan doesn't push too easily.


I'm probably coming off as upset, huh? Well that is because I am. The administration has repeatedly balanced the budget on the backs of the employees. This is just another attempt to do so again. But this time it's putting the public in harms way. I couldn't, in good conscious, even entertain the idea of dissolving the Police Department were I in a decision making position on the Council. The Police Department has been cut to the bone now and I spend more time at the computer than I do on the streets due to the mandates of records keeping and the lack of clerical help. The citizens of the community are the eyes and ears for the Department now. Any more cuts will certainly be the Department's dissolution. You, the citizens, set the tone for what you want in your town. You may be called on to decide if you want to live in an area without a Police presence. If you have strong feelings in this area you may want to start talking to your Council members. If memory serves, they still do work for the public.

I, for one, have had a 100% increase in my property taxes, as I'm sure many of did, but I wonder if these added funds have even been considered. I too would hope Juneau would cough up more money through the AST contract, revenue sharing or somewhere but threatening them that we'll dissolve the Police Department if they don't come across is not the answer.

I would like to think the administration would start communicating more with their employees. We do indeed have knowledge of our jobs and those we work with so closely and we take pride in the jobs we do. I shouldn't have to hear rumor or hearsay on the streets that concern the Police Department. I should have been contacted by the Mayor, City Manager or Council Member for input prior to it being acted on by the Council. Possibly it's a way of insuring the subject matter gets pushed through without opposition or it could be just a lack of respect. Now you, the citizens of our community, know where I stand. Maybe you can question the administration and get their side of the issue. I don't think they will share it with you without you're asking. They certainly didn't with me.

Thank You,

A.W. (Andy) Anderson
 Chief of Police

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