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Letters to the Editor

Ferry Rebuttal by Mike Beal, SNA . . .

October 30, 2007

Dick Wyland
Mayor
City of Seldovia
P.O. Drawer B
Seldovia, Alaska 99663

Dear Mayor Wyland;

This letter is in response to your letter of October 18, 2007 where your first sentence stated, "This letter expresses our (City of Seldovia) opposition to the present Kachemak Bay Ferry Plan".

Seldovia Native Association, Inc. (SNA) was disappointed, but not surprised, that the City of Seldovia would once again mail your opposition of the Kachemak Bay Ferry to every possible person in either the State of Alaska or the United States government that could help to stop the Ferry Project.

Before I discuss point by point the inaccuracies in the City of Seldovia's letter let me first state a few facts about the ferry project.

- SNA requested \$14 million to build a passenger and vehicle ferry to service Kachemak Bay area communities. With the cost of aluminum, steel, and copper soaring that same boat SNA first envisioned would now cost over \$28 million. SNA has received \$2 million to do a design, development and feasibility study which we are now working on. Also, we has received an additional \$8 million for construction of the ferry and the upland facilities that go with it. We no longer believe that additional ferry funding is likely.
- SNA is currently working in the design, development and feasibility stage of the project, as part of the first \$2 million funding. We had "open house" style meetings

Thanks for the WebCam & Newspaper . . .

Thank you for putting all those web cam views on Seldovia.com, and I'm sure the new one at Treetops will be getting some great sunset shots. What a view!!

How great that now we can check the weather in Homer before we fly!! and people coming to Seldovia can get an idea of the weather in our area too. It must be a great help for the airlines, if they have internet.

We appreciate the paper each week, to keep up to date on local news, and to read the interesting spotlights. Keep up the good work.!!

Darlene Crawford

recently in Homer and Seldovia where a copy of our design, development and feasibility study were presented to the public. The public had an opportunity to discuss with myself and our consultants their thoughts on the project. We have also received 25 written comments so far from the public.

- After addressing the public's input and written comments we will then refine our preferred alternative ferry design and present to both Homer and Seldovia our chosen design before we prepare RFP's to build the ferry.

We believe that a passenger ferry makes a lot of sense for Seldovia. A state of the art fast ferry will make Seldovia a destination tourist attraction which could add 8,000 tourists to the streets of Seldovia during the summer months. A ferry terminal on the Homer side will double as a Seldovia visitor center that will attract some of the 500,000 tourists that visit the spit to take the next step and travel to Seldovia. The profit from the summer months could help the passenger ferry run a limited schedule in the winter that would complement the Alaska Marine Highway System and provide easy weekend access in the winter. The ferry will be designed to take quite a bit of personal freight or luggage on board which will help tourists spend the night and locals get groceries and supplies to Seldovia easily and inexpensively. This economic development project will help to turn the tide of reduced population in the Seldovia area. The ferry will be stationed in Seldovia and this alone will provide jobs for accountants, GM, crew, maintenance, captain, marketing and other employees. SNA also owns the Dimond Center Hotel and has extensive experience in tourism and this project fits our comfort level and future plans to use the Dimond Center Hotel as a way to funnel tourists to Seldovia.

Here is a list of the City of Seldovia's complaints and SNA's response.

- "The City of Seldovia has had no input into this project's development since supporting SNA/SVT in acquiring federal and state funds for the ferry".

Response: Nothing could be further from the truth. The SNA paid the City of Seldovia \$15,225 to be brought up to date and participate in meetings on the ferry in association with our consultants. City Manager, Kurt Reynertson, participated in many meetings with myself and our consultants. The City of Seldovia was reimbursed \$4,625 for Kurt Reynertson to meet with our consultants, tour shipyards, and meet with the ferry operators on Prince of Wales Island. City Manager Reynertson also participated in meetings in Seattle to choose a naval architect and cast the same vote that I did for our naval architect selection. City Manager Reynertson participated in several telephone conference calls with our consultants and I constantly kept him up to date on the project through personal meetings or telephone calls. The SNA worked with City Manager Reynertson and their consultants on the port authority. SNA paid the City of Seldovia

and/or their consultants \$2,974 in 2005, \$42,370 in 2006 and \$18,090 in 2007 for just the port authority which does not count the \$15,225 and \$4,625 for City of Seldovia employees ferry

issues other than the port authority.

- “SNA/SVT have ignored all requests for information and the City has, in fact, been left out of the loop since the beginning of this project”.

Response: Nothing could be further than the truth. Did you bill us in error for the \$83,204 we have paid the City and their consultants? The only requests for information I have ever received came from City Manager Reynertson and I always met his requests.

This is very important. Recently, I saw where the City of Seldovia was having a series of executive sessions concerning the Kachemak Bay Ferry. I called Mayor Dick Wyland and said I don't know what you guys are talking about but if there is any information that I can get you I would be happy to do so. Do you need anything from me? The answer was no. Has there been a phone call to SNA requesting any information. The answer is no. Has there been a letter requesting information from SNA. The answer is no.

I did commit to work with the City of Seldovia and I have kept my pledge faithfully.

SNA and myself are personally committed to work with the City of Seldovia to make sure that the best possible ferry is chosen as the Kachemak Bay Ferry. I will put aside this unfortunate letter and meet with the City just about any time, just about any where, and just about any number of times for the City to get comfortable with this project. However, there are some constraints. The Seldovia Village Tribe is fiduciary liable for this project and they alone signed the legal documents to perform under the contract.

At the end of the day it is the SVT that is legally required to make final decisions. The ferry is going to have to be economically viable.

- “SNA/SVT completely disregarded the Steering Committee that was established to monitor and help manage the progress of the project and they never held a meeting”.

Response: The City of Seldovia formed a steering committee, not the SNA or the SVT. Resolution 04-11 states, “A resolution of the City Council of the City of Seldovia, Alaska, establishing a steering committee for the Kachemak Bay Ferry Project”. Neither the SNA or the SVT can call to order a City of Seldovia Committee. The resolution also had a sunset clause, “Unless extended by subsequent action by the Seldovia City Council, this resolution expires at 12:00 midnight, Alaska Standard Time, December 31, 2004”. We received a letter on August 31, 2005 saying the City was starting up their steering committee again, but never heard from them past that date.

- The City of Seldovia was offered no opportunity to collaborate or communicate with SNA/SVT on the content of the study's feasibility, change of scope or social and economic impact.

Response: The first of two public meetings to discuss the feasibility was held in Seldovia on September 19th and I might add with excellent participation from the community. Lots of possibilities, problems, and potentials were discussed. The feasibility study the City is referring to needs to be refined and presented one more time.

Again, before this letter was sent “to express our opposition to the present Kachemak Bay Ferry Plan” no call was made, no letter was sent expressing a desire for more information. The only call was from me to Mayor Wyland offering any help or clarification and that call from me to Mayor Wyland was made after he received the feasibility study on August 17 (one month before the public received it) and before the public meeting on September 19. On August 17 our consultant, Mike Adams from Pacific Marine Technical Services, met with the new City Manager and with Mayor Wyland. Also Mike Adams met with the harbor master to brief everybody on the project.

During 2006 Chance Collier and myself made a power point presentation to the City Council concerning the ferry and told them at that meeting it would be a passenger only ferry. Tim Robertson, of Nuka Research, was also present and talked to the City Council about the ferry project.

- “A questionnaire was sent out by SNA/SVT and the results of that survey were not even included in the feasibility document. We can only assume that the results were very negative to the project”.

Response: Our environmental consultant made a mistake in mailing the surveys. The date the survey had to be returned by (on the survey) had already passed by the time they were mailed. Many recipients of the survey did not respond because of the date problem and it was our belief that it made the survey unscientific. However, one of the findings from those that were returned seemed to infer the Seldovia public didn't want us competing with the Alaska Marine Highway System. SNA will be happy to show you the survey results but because of the above stated problem, they would not be accurate or usable for the purpose they were intended.

- “The question and answer session at the Seldovia (public) meeting (September 19, 2007) was abruptly halted before the scheduled end of the meeting, leaving many citizens questions unasked and unanswered”.

Response: It just isn't true. The meeting went from 6 to 8, just as advertised. If I inadvertently left someone out it sure wasn't on purpose. I thought I got to anybody who wanted to speak. I also told the crowd that we were easy to get hold of and we would like to meet with anybody that has concerns or questions (including the City of Seldovia). We told everybody about our website, kbfferry.com, and asked all in attendance to contact us if they had any further questions. At 8:00pm the crowd was getting restless and wanted to leave, but I honestly thought I got to everybody that wanted to speak.

- “The City of Seldovia questions the long-term viability

without subsidies, of this down-graded tour boat plan”.

Response: Now there is a question that makes a lot of sense. Our initial feasibility shows that a passenger ferry is profitable in the summer time and loses money in the winter. We are hoping that it will be able to do weekend service in the winter with the summer profits. As we develop the preferred alternative further we will refine and develop the business plan further (we are in the process of this right now). As we get closer to determining whether we use jets or props, the final length and width, the desired speed, the gas consumption and other variables our final business plan will take shape. But our preliminary plan looks pretty good and I'm confident that once you market it correctly it will work. Also, we are working with Jack Montgomery of the M/V Rainbow Connection and Tim Cashman of the M/V Discovery to be a part of this project.

- The feasibility study states, “Service was intended to be provided year-round and could potentially replace the Alaska Marine Highway System existing service to Seldovia”. This is unacceptable to the City of Seldovia and most of the community and was not part of the original plan that the City of Seldovia agreed to.

Response: I am going to simply quote the second paragraph of your letter where you state, “As stated in the original SNA proposal, the purpose of this project was to determine the feasibility of a new passenger and vehicle ferry to provide daily service between (Kachemak Bay communities) and to then design and construct a feasible ferry”. “The City of Seldovia passed a resolution in support of that approach”.

You can't have it both ways. In paragraph number #2 you are clearly complaining that it is not a vehicle ferry as originally supported by the City per your resolution and on page 2 of your last bullet you are clearly stating that you don't want a vehicle ferry. You can only complain one way - you can complain that you don't want a vehicle ferry or you can complain that you want a vehicle ferry.


In Summary:

The Kachemak Bay Ferry project is an outstanding project for the Seldovia community and will generate jobs, economic development and help to turn around an economy that is suffering. This is only one factor of the Seldovia economy. We are in favor of other forms of development in Seldovia along with this project and we can't understand why you would send this slanderous letter before communicating with us. What other economic development projects do you have going that you like better? Or, maybe it is just that you don't want any economic development projects? As I have demonstrated above I have always been available. I called you, I've paid you and I have kept your City Manager informed. The City of Seldovia never called and never a sent a letter.

However, SNA is not about to let a dispute keep us from keeping our word. As SNA has always done we will meet with you just about anytime, just about anywhere, and just about as many times

as necessary to help you understand this project. We are not going to hold a grudge. We look forward to working with you in a positive atmosphere because we love Seldovia and wouldn't want this great opportunity for economic development to fall apart over a disagreement. We would like to ask you to keep our correspondence in writing to lessen "he said - she said" disputes in the future and send us a note and let us know how we can provide any type of information on the ferry you would like to see.

Sincerely,
 Michael Beal, CEO
 907-868-8006
 mbeal@snai.com

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