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March 11, 2020

To: Chairman Lewis and Committee Members
City of Homer Parks, Recreation and Culture
Homer, Alaska 99603

Regarding: Proposed purchase of property for City park and convention center.

Dear Chairman Lewis and Citizen Committee Members:

I am following up with the following information to elaborate on my brief presentation to the Committee on February 20, 2020 regarding the proposed purchase of the Dell property for a community park and convention center. Hopefully, since my overview presentation, you have each had time to drive by the property. It is located on the ocean side of the Sterling Highway between West Hill Road and the Jehova's Witness Church.

Imagine all who enter Homer via the highway encountering one of the most scenic world views at a park marking the entrance to our community. This park would make a statement, both subtle and overt, that we of Homer wish to identify with and be stewards of our beautiful natural surroundings. It would make a cultural statement to newcomers and all that we live in a special place on earth, and we wish to have complementary development.

I envision a community/convention center in a "park setting" which would host our community events and also be an income producing engine for Homer, attracting conventions from near and far. At present we have no such offerings for these kinds of business opportunities. By "park setting" I envision a natural habitat, possibly with boardwalks; a gazebo bird-viewing area; and a cultural center which would honor the indigenous Dena'ina people, their history and contributions to the area. Perhaps there could even be a protected stairway giving access to the beach. This park would not duplicate the Karen Hornaday park we already have. There would be no swings, camping, or picnic tables, for example. The emphasis, instead, would be to complement the community/convention center with natural and culturally imbued surroundings.

Commercial development is very likely on the horizon for a property like this. Attractive aspects include sewer and water, electricity, and access to natural gas. Also, of interest are its three highway pull-outs and a completed wet land survey. In addition, it is deemed to be stable bluff property with significant growth. As an example of its attracted to commercial buyers, a much smaller piece of neighboring property was considered for development of a strip mall just a short time ago. However, I believe a commercial development of this property would be a great loss for the people of Homer. To avoid this possibility, I am urging to Committee to recommend the purchase of this property as soon as possible.

Some of the features of this property include:

WILLIAM J MARLEY

2

- A 31-acre piece of property abutting the 1917 meander line with 12 to 13 acres of upland useable acreage affording ample room for structures plus parking and a park.
- The value of the property listed with Bay Realty is for 1.2 million dollars. My two partners and I have owned the property for over 45 years. An appraisal of the property that was completed in 2017 appraised the value at slightly more than 2 million dollars. If the property were to be divided into three lots, the appraisal of the three lots combined would be 2.5 million dollars. I would be willing to provide the appraisal to the committee and its members. Certainly, it would appear that the 1.2 million dollar figure is fair and, undoubtedly, in view of recent Homer lands development, the value has gone up since the 2017 appraisal. In addition, my partners and I would be willing to discuss favorable financial terms with the City.
- This is the only land of park size that approximates both the highway, ocean, and beach.
- The bluff erosion is judged to be insignificant by Kachemak Bay Research Reserve. Interestingly, the sea level is rising at 3mm per year but the land mass is rising at 8 mm per year. A common mis-perception is that tidal action reaches the base of the bluff, but, in fact, very few high tides reach the toe of the bluff annually.
- The 100-foot average level of the bluff does afford tsunami protection.

If you embrace this vision, then acquiring the property is the first step toward making this vision a reality. I propose that the City of Homer purchase this property as a step forward for our community. Specifically, I am requesting the PR&C committee pass a proposal to proceed with the concept of a city park for a community convention center with a request to the City Council to create a small task force to discuss financial sources and terms.

Thank you each for your time and effort on behalf of our community.

William J. Marley