

Additional Materials

Title 49- Committee of the Whole

Assembly Chambers
5:30 pm
Meeting Date: March 14, 2023

1. AME2021 0008:

- a. Public Comment from Andrew Heist, received 1/23/2023

From: [Andrew Heist](#)
To: [PC Comments](#)
Subject: Proposed Hazard Maps
Date: Monday, January 23, 2023 10:41:23 AM

EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

Hello Planning Commission members,

I sent the below to the CBJ Assembly, but I understand the issue is still in the Planning Commission. Please consider my comments:

My name is Andrew Heist and I am the property owner of the adjacent properties at 310 & 314 Irwin Street. If the proposed maps are adopted, the 4-plex at 310 Irwin St. will go from 'moderate' to 'severe' risk and the single family dwelling at 314 Irwin St. will go from 'no risk' level to 'severe' risk. Both buildings are 103 years old and have no records or evidence of impact from an avalanche or slide event.

I am requesting that you delay adoption of these maps until the following has occurred:

- extensive public outreach
- additional research/studies on potential mitigation strategies
- additional analysis of how existing structures mitigate risks outlined in new maps
- extensive research into factors involved in the City of Sitka's recent adoption of new hazard maps followed by nearly immediately rescinding their action.
- extensive research on the real-world consequences the new classifications will have on Juneau property owners' ability to borrow, buy, sell, develop, and insure their affected properties.
- clearly outline and communicate to the public the restrictions/ramifications these classifications will have on affected properties.

I know that assembly members are aware that this is a very complicated issue with huge potential consequences (many of which are not known), and I'll try to be brief in my comments and close with how the proposed changes will directly affect me.

The work of TetraTech was going on without much public awareness until the proposed maps were published, showing some 220 additional properties now included in hazard areas. This resulted in very justifiable concern from many affected residents. Through several meetings and information sessions, one large takeaway agreed upon by all parties was that a great deal of public outreach was necessary before moving ahead with anything. After the initial flurry of activity, possibly due to the depth and complexity of the issue, it seemed to be stalled in committee without much public outreach, or anything else, happening.

In September 2022, a slide occurred on Gastineau Ave resulting in severe damage to several properties. This event seemed to jump-start the process to adopt the maps despite the fact that

little additional work, research, or public involvement had occurred.

The Gastineau slide was very unfortunate, and thankfully no individuals were injured. This slide would have occurred whether or not the maps had been adopted and the maps would not have prevented any of the damage. While it's understandable that this brings the issue back to the fore, rushing ahead to adopt these maps despite the fact that very little additional work, study, research, and outreach has occurred feels extremely reactionary, and that is not at all a sound methodology for effective policy making. There is so much more work to be done before this decision can be responsibly enacted— please do not let the Gastineau slide push you to rush this monumental decision that will hugely affect some 220 property owners.

Please complete the following additional work before coming to a decision:

- Communicate with your peers in Sitka to see how their new maps affected property owners. Talk to members of the Real Estate, Banking, and Insurance communities to learn how the maps affected them. Research why the maps were quickly rescinded. And -most importantly- proactively share this information with your constituents. With such a recent and nearby event and subsequent map and policy change in Sitka, that was rather quickly undone, CBJ should be learning everything they can from that and sharing it with the public here in Juneau.

- Embark on further studies to assess risk mitigation strategies. How and where are they possible?

- Do further study on how existing structures affect or mitigate risk of other structures. My 4-plex sits directly below a massive condominium complex. There is no consideration given to this massive barrier when my property is assigned a new risk level. A decision with these important impacts on property owners needs to be fully researched before enacting.

- Communicate to the public about your plans to re-map other areas of Juneau. This project only covers a small section of Juneau and has huge potential negative impacts for affected property owners. There are areas of Juneau that have topography much more similar than downtown is to where the massive Haines slide occurred, yet they are not changing risk levels. Is this a fair way to make policy?

- Do extensive research with lenders, insurers, real estate agents and developers to learn the actual consequences these new maps will have on property owners. This must be done prior to the adoption of new maps to avoid potential serious implications for many peoples' most valuable and substantial investment.

In closing I'd like to share how these proposed changes will affect me and my specific situation.

After several seasons working at Allen Marine Tours and saving up barely enough for a down payment, I purchased my first home in 2008. It is the big yellow 1920 4-plex at 310 Irwin St. I lived in it for eight years and unlike many other Juneau landlords, I devised a business plan that I could be proud of. I would work hard to keep up with all necessary maintenance, while working on a long range plan to upgrade the aging plumbing and heating systems. I would keep rents more reasonable

than most, opting for longer term residents who would be part of the community of our neighborhood. I would make the apartments great places to live, keep the building in excellent condition and when the time came to sell the property, I would have a very valuable asset.

While the exact consequences of these new maps are not yet known, they will dramatically alter this plan. The uncertainty around buying, selling, borrowing and insurance brought up by these changes mean that my most significant, important investment, and the keystone to my lifelong business plan may not actually be a valuable investment at all. Now, instead of looking ahead to the day my investment bears fruit when I sell it, I am inclined to shift gears into the much more common mindset of: invest as little as possible in the property while reaping the maximum profit. Make the money now, and it doesn't matter if the deferred maintenance and poor upkeep result in a lower sale price. In my case, though I have resisted it at all costs, I am inclined to convert my four 2-bedroom apartments to short term vacation rentals to maximize profit. I have loved being a part of the community by providing nice, affordable, stable rentals for a very long list of fantastic Juneau community members. If these maps move forward as proposed, with none of the additional work and research needed to make this decision responsibly, that's the decision I will be forced to make to protect my most important investment.

Both of my affected properties are in D-18 multi family areas. With the restrictions on increasing density in hazard areas, these new classifications nullify this valuable zoning classification. I have plans to add a rear dormer on the 4-plex to add two additional 1-bedroom apartments as well as expanding the neighboring single family home to a 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom home with an attached accessory apartment. If these maps go forward, those plans become impossible. Does CBJ plan to compensate property owners for these extremely substantial changes to their properties' potential?

It's worth noting again that both of these properties have been standing for 103 years and neither have been affected by any slide or avalanche damage. An event of the magnitude needed to destroy the gigantic condominium complex above my properties and hit mine would be a 500 or 1,000 year event. Is this the scope of planning the assembly is undertaking?

Please— do a great deal more work, learning, research, strategizing and communicating with the public before making this decision that will potentially decimate the small business I have built from the ground up here in my beloved Juneau and hugely impact hundreds of other members of our community.

Respectfully,

Andrew Heist