



City and Borough of Juneau
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TO: Mayor Weldon and Borough Assembly
DATE: April 1, 2024
FROM: Robert Barr, Deputy City Manager
RE: Proposed summer campground changes

The Committee of the Whole discussed this topic at its March 11, 2024 meeting and this memo provides an update since the [staff report](#)¹ given at that meeting.

Legally, we've been working with the landowner and our respective attorneys to care for concerns around liability, indemnification, and contract negotiations. While we've made progress on that front and expect a successful conclusion, we don't yet have a contract.

Practically, we've identified a location for the material currently stored at 100 Mill St – the JD Wastewater Treatment Plant – in a large truck turn-around area. We plan to begin the work of moving that material after we finish contract negotiations and receive direction from the Assembly at this meeting. After that work is complete, we will start the work of transforming the site into a campground – removing the existing barbed wire, adding additional entrance/exit points, adding restrooms, potable water, bear/garbage/sharps containers, and tent platforms.

Additionally in the interim between meetings, staff met with the Rock Dump business community to discuss this proposal and hear concerns and alternative ideas. The Assembly has received comment via email from this group and others on this topic. We understand and, generally, find merit in the concerns we've heard. As discussed at the March 11 meeting, the immediate geographic area anywhere we place this campground will see increased negative impacts. The policy call in this case is to balance those impacts with the potential benefits that individual campers would see by having a CBJ sanctioned campground in a more visible and easier to access area. Additional factors exist – dispersed camping will happen regardless, but less dispersed camping will occur if a campground exists.

Some alternative ideas that we have been asked to consider in the interim include:

1. Utilize the "little" rock dump instead of 100 Mill St.
 - Safety – access is via a narrow road shoulder with high-speed traffic immediately adjacent to pedestrians
 - Weather – the little rock dump is highly exposed to the weather – much more so than 100 Mill St. or almost any other conceivable campground location
 - Invisibility – behaviorally, a campground at the little rock dump would likely be similar to the campground last year at the end of Gastineau Ave.
2. Find a different parcel of CBJ owned property, not near a residential or business area
 - While there may be alternative locations, it is unlikely that a location exists in a goldilocks zone where we could balance the need for visibility/access with mitigated or very low impacts or neighboring businesses or residences.
3. Conduct a planning effort to seek a longer-term solution

¹ <https://bit.ly/3x76JRV>

- The last Assembly task force on homelessness was in 2017.
- A task force represents a significant commitment of resources – time for the work of the task force, followed by time and money to implement its recommendations. A great deal has changed since 2017 in this broader arena in Juneau and whether a task force is created or not, a comprehensive review of those changes would likely be beneficial.

Recommendation:

Hear public testimony, discuss, and weigh the balance of the public benefit of a visible campground against the likely and potential negative impacts.

Provide staff direction to continue on the current path by keeping this legislation at the Assembly, currently scheduled for public hearing and adoption at the April 29th meeting; or, change paths and refer this topic to committee for further discussion.