

PETITION TO THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU ASSEMBLY

March 24, 2024

We, the individuals and business entities shown on the accompanying cover letter, seek redress from our local elected officials regarding the intolerable and unjustified continuation of illegal activities in our community that are ruining commerce, causing a continued blight on our community, and creating a clear and present danger to the public.

WHEREAS the City and Borough of Juneau (“CBJ”) has undertaken to relocate a seasonal camping ground for people experiencing homelessness, currently located on property owned by the AJT Mining Properties, Inc. known as the Mill Campground south of downtown Juneau, to the Alaska Electric Light & Power Company (“AEL&P”) outdoor storage lot on the corner of Thane Road and 100 Mill Street in the Rock Dump Industrial Area; and,

WHEREAS the Mill Campground, and the nearby street parking at the end of Gastineau Avenue adjacent to the existing campground, has become a source of open and notorious illegal drug use, drug dealing, and the sale of stolen goods during the camping season; and,

WHEREAS the individuals using Mill Campground have engaged in numerous acts of vandalism, chopping down trees close to powerlines, rerouting creeks, and setting fire to power poles endangering infrastructure necessary for the public good; and,

WHEREAS the individuals using the Mill Campground have illegally discarded an estimated seventy-four (74) tons¹ of trash at the site last year, and in the residential areas adjacent to the campsites that were collected and disposed of by the public at the public’s expense, and by local citizens at the risk of personal harm; and,

WHEREAS the individuals using the Mill Campground illegally discarded thousands of needles (measured as 19 gallons, dry weight)² used for illegal drug use at the site that were collected and disposed of by the public at the public’s expense, and collected in the adjacent areas by local citizens at the risk of personal harm; and,

WHEREAS individuals using the Mill Campground have regularly engaged in transactional sex at the site; and,

WHEREAS individuals using the Mill Campground are a constant threat to the businesses and residents located adjacent to and in the vicinity of the site, as well as on AEL&P property setting fire to power poles, cutting down trees, redirecting creeks and streams, illegally entering the campground through private property, and cutting down fences; and,

¹ According to CBJ findings as reported in the *Juneau Empire*, March 12, 2024.

² *Id.*

WHEREAS the concentration of individuals living at and visiting the Mill Campground routinely engage in numerous acts of belligerence, illegal conduct, and rude behavior characterized by frequent and sometimes armed confrontations and abuse to the citizens and visitors in the vicinity of the site, has a growing, negative impact on business activities, and especially the seasonal tourist trade that is a vital part of Juneau’s economy, as well as an impact on the well-being of nearby residents; and,

WHEREAS the Mill Campground serves many residents as an open drug scene for those who decline services for their mental health issues, treatment for drug and alcohol addiction, are hiding from society or the law, or go there to buy and sell drugs; and,

WHEREAS the CBJ is contemplating various alternatives to the utilization of the existing Mill Campground, including relocation as an emergency measure to the Rock Dump Industrial Park, or by closing the Mill Campground permanently and resigning to the fact that this population will disperse throughout the community, without review, study, or discussion within the community while bypassing public comment; and,

WHEREAS the CBJ Ordinance 49 addressing permissible uses at Section 21.200 precludes operation of campgrounds in industrial zoned property; and,

WHEREAS the CBJ working committee on March 11th, 2024, estimated the cost of relocating the existing Mill Campground to a new location will likely exceed \$100,000 in public funds, an estimated sum that does not include funds for safety and security, forcing businesses to bear the burden of securing, monitoring, and surveilling the 100 Mill Street area; and,

WHEREAS businesses in the Rock Dump Industrial Park have already incurred thousands of dollars in expenses for security equipment and anticipate 10s of thousands more to prevent the damage from vandalism of buses, break-ins, and theft of property experienced during the 2023/24 winter season because of their proximity to the City Warming Shelter operating in the Rock Dump. The affected businesses include but are not limited to: Gastineau Guiding Company, Timberwolf Ventures Inc. *aka Alaska Shirt Company*, Green Elephant, Alaska Marine Lines, M&M Tours, and Juneau Tours and Whale Watch; and,

WHEREAS warming shelter residents have already broken into and used nearby buses, vehicles, and facilities to engage in sex, illegal drug use, and the destruction of property for sport as evidenced by video footage from the Alaska Coach Tours bus lot; and,

WHEREAS there is great concern that the CBJ has been unable to uphold their part of the lease agreement with AEL&P during the 2023 camping season as outlined in Attachment B of the lease which includes the following monitoring schedule: 1) Park Ranger staff will visit one or two times a day to monitor, perform registration, maintain firewood stock, potable water availability, and general upkeep, 2) Parks and Recreation maintenance workers will visit a minimum of one time per day to pick up garbage and maintain an orderly and clean site, 3) Juneau Police Department officer will visit the site one time per day to maintain a safe facility, 4) The Homelessness Coordinator will visit the facility 3 times per week to perform intake; and,

WHEREAS businesses in the Rock Dump Industrial Park, including Alaska Marine Lines, Delta Western Petroleum, Petro Marine Services, and the AJ Dock are required to operate under the Federal Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002, provisions related to Maritime Security (MARSEC), which mandate the maintenance of secure and restricted areas according to federal law and in coordination with international law, now face substantial, immediate and mandatory investments in security infrastructure and surveillance to fulfill the laws and protect operations from the lawless conduct of certain individuals who used the Winter Warming Shelter and those who will likely do the same near the proposed homeless campground at 100 Mill Street; and,

WHEREAS the CBJ has failed to provide time for these businesses to prepare for the relocation of the Mill Campground in advance of the 2024 tourist season; and,

WHEREAS seven tour and transportation companies operating in the Rock Dump Industrial Park have an obligation to cruise lines and cruise line passengers to provide reliable, safe and timely transport without the risk of unnecessary delays or sudden interruption of service; and

WHEREAS approximately 400,000 visitors arrive each season at the AJ Dock and walk or ride downtown along Mount Roberts Road and Thane Road; and,

WHEREAS businesses in the Rock Dump Industrial Park provide vital services that benefit all of Juneau residents, including Alaska Marine Lines which ships most of the goods that arrive in Juneau by sea, and various other vital businesses, including Sysco Food Services, Delta Western Petroleum, and Petro Marine Services, many of whom were negatively impacted by the winter homeless warming shelter, and will be further harmed by moving the homeless campground to the proposed site at 100 Mill Street; and,

WHEREAS the unacceptable risk of business interruption affecting all of Juneau during a criminal event or fire requiring emergency services to shut down Thane Road is dramatically increased by the presence of a homeless encampment rampant with crime; and,

WHEREAS many of the hundreds of employees at existing businesses located in the Rock Dump Industrial Park have already expressed fears for their personal safety and concerns about working in the proximity of a crime-ridden homeless encampment, especially those who work after normal business hours which include warehouse workers, bus drivers returning from their late shift, office staff arriving early or managing late shifts, and those who walk or ride their bicycles to work; and,

WHEREAS the CBJ has allocated no funds for security, nor offered support in the form of grants or short-term loans to businesses faced with unanticipated and unnecessary expenses to protect their operations and employees: and,

WHEREAS the concentration and relocation of individuals into a new campground, removed from current facilities and organizations that assist the homeless, and which are funded in part with CBJ funds, will perpetuate an intolerable situation and continue to foster and promote illegal acts and other behavior that is ruinous to the public safety and well-being of our community: and,

WHEREAS the CBJ support for homelessness interventions rose from \$500k per year on average to over \$5 million in 2023,³ the CBJ has and continues to provide significant resources devoted to homeless individuals, those afflicted with drug and alcohol addiction, and mental health issues successfully in other Juneau locations; and

WHEREAS the permanent or temporary discontinuation of camping services will trigger dispersal of this population into the community, and likely a return to an unmanageable level of camping in doorways on Franklin Street and in the Marine Park: and

NOW, THEREFORE, we the petitioners, listed in the accompanying letter, request the CBJ act as follows:

- A. **Permanently close the Mill Campground, and suspend plans for the relocation of the campground to 100 Mill Street**, or any other location in or adjacent to commercial or residential property; and,
- B. Identify a CBJ-owned property or other property suitable for such an emergency encampment, **pass an emergency resolution to expedite the relocation to a suitable site by May 1st, 2024**, including, as necessary, the appropriation of funds to prepare such an encampment, funds to monitor, maintain and secure any such encampment, and allocate sufficient funds to care for the needs of campers at the new site.
- C. **Suspend any plans which consider temporary or permanent dispersion of this population into the community past the May 1st proposed deadline.**
- D. We also request, the **CBJ involve business and community leaders in seeking a long-term solution** for the shelter of individuals who are unable, due to lack of availability, unwilling, or ineligible to stay in existing temporary housing for persons experiencing homelessness.

³ [As per Deputy Manager Robert Barr's presentation to the CBJ working committee on March 11, 2024]