

From: James Kerr <jkerr@petersburgak.gov>

Sent: Monday, June 8, 2026 4:05 PM

To: Assembly <assembly@petersburgak.gov>

Subject: Missed Public Safety Opportunity with the Tidal Network Land Sale

Mayor and Members of the Petersburg Borough Assembly,

I want to express concerns regarding the Assembly's decision to reject the sale of Borough-owned land adjacent to the Haugen Drive Fire Hall for the proposed Tidal Network communications tower.

My concern is not centered on Tidal Network itself. My concern is the missed opportunity to secure long-term public safety benefits for the Borough and its taxpayers.

As discussed throughout this process, the proposed land sale agreement contained language that would have provided the Petersburg Borough with the ability to place public safety communications equipment on Tidal Network towers located on Mitkof Island. This provision represented a significant opportunity to improve emergency communications coverage for Police, Fire, EMS, Search and Rescue, and 911 Dispatch operations without requiring the Borough to construct and maintain its own tower infrastructure.

Today, there are known areas within the Borough where radio coverage is unreliable. In some locations, responders must rely on vehicle-mounted radios instead of portable radios to communicate with dispatch. These communication gaps affect responder safety, operational effectiveness, and ultimately public safety.

Had the agreement been approved, the Borough would have secured access to communications infrastructure that could have been utilized for decades into the future. Instead, the Borough may now face substantially higher costs if it later determines that additional radio coverage is necessary. Taxpayers could ultimately be required to fund the construction of Borough-owned towers, lease space on privately owned towers, or develop alternative communications infrastructure that may have been available through the negotiated agreement.

The public discussion surrounding these towers gave very little consideration to the long-term public safety benefits and financial advantages that the agreement could have provided to Borough residents.

As Chief of Police, I view communications infrastructure the same way I view roads, utilities, or emergency equipment it is foundational public safety infrastructure. Reliable communications are not a luxury. They are essential to effective emergency response.

The Assembly's decision may ultimately prove to be far more costly than the sale of a small parcel of Borough land. More importantly, it may have delayed an opportunity to significantly improve emergency communications coverage throughout Mitkof Island at a time when the Borough could have secured those benefits through negotiation rather than future expenditure.

I hope future discussions regarding communications infrastructure will place greater emphasis on public safety needs, responder safety, long-term planning, and fiscal responsibility to the taxpayers of Petersburg.

Respectfully,

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