

To:

Mayor Jensen  
Assembly Member Meucci  
Assembly Member Lynn  
Assembly Member Marsh  
Assembly Member Newman  
Assembly Member Kensinger  
Assembly Member Fine-Walsh

April 4, 2023

We are R.D. and Madonna Parks, citizens of Petersburg, Alaska. We are the parents of Molly Parks, our only child, who was one of the young women killed on July 4, 2016 while working for the Petersburg Borough.

On that day, Molly and Marie Giesbrecht, two young women at the prime of their lives died in a horrific crash due to the actions of Borough employee William Christopher Allen who had a seizure while driving the Borough van; creating a violent crash which killed these women. Allen was known to have a seizure disorder but he was still directed to drive the van that day. Catherine Cardenas was injured in the crash as well. By the grace of God, a third young woman Cina Martinez was not in the van when it was wrecked because she had overslept.

We have tried to get justice for these young women and answers to how and why this could have happened in our town since that day.

William Christopher Allen was tried and plead guilty to manslaughter for his part in killing these women.

Because the Borough has refused to provide us or the public with any information of this fateful incident, we attempted to gain justice and acknowledgement of the Petersburg Borough's role in these women's deaths by filing a Wrongful Death lawsuit. That lawsuit went all the way to the Alaska Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ruled recently in a 2-1 decision that while the deaths were likely entirely preventable, the Borough was protected from the lawsuit under the Alaska Workers Compensation provisions.

In her dissenting opinion, Justice Susan Carney stated that both Allen's and the Borough's acts "were criminal; each of them behaved in a way that should prevent them from evading responsibility for their conduct by hiding behind the shield of Worker's Compensation".

It is ironic that if Christopher Allen had killed or maimed anyone other than his fellow Borough employees, the Petersburg Borough would have been held accountable. By paying its Workers Compensation insurance premiums, the Borough has effectively purchased a license to kill its employees without being held accountable.

As our Wrongful Death lawsuit against the Borough has now been dismissed, we have no further legal options and the Borough is no longer at legal risk. While the Borough continues to remain defiant and takes no responsibility in its recent statement responding to the Supreme Court decision, there is no longer any reason for the Borough to withhold information from us or the public. It is time for the Assembly to take control back from the lawyers.

We don't need statements of deepest sympathies from the Borough. We are coming to the Assembly as citizens of the Petersburg Borough to ask for answers as to how this tragedy could have happened. It is important to make the facts public for the safety of the citizens of this Borough and to make sure that it can never happen again.

We are asking for the Assembly to conduct a full investigation of the Borough's involvement and handling of this

crash which resulted in the deaths of Petersburg's young citizens. We are asking that it be conducted by a third party outside of the Borough Administration and the results be made available to the public.

- The investigation should include a review of the actions and inactions of the Borough Administration including the Borough Manager, Borough Clerk, Parks and Recreation Director and Molly's immediate Supervisor.
- We request that the investigation include Borough hiring practices and how William Christopher Allen was hired as a lifeguard and driver for the Petersburg Parks and Recreation Department without a valid driver's license and with a known seizure order. Were Borough hiring protocols followed? We believe that nepotism and personal relationships factored inappropriately in his hiring.
- We also request that the Borough investigate the supervisory oversight while Mr. Allen was employed. Mr. Allen had multiple seizures while at his Parks and Recreation job. In spite of these seizures and his physician's advice to the Borough that he not be allowed to drive, his supervisor continued to allow him to drive. Just two months after his April seizure, his supervisor scheduled him to drive the Parks and Recreation van and gave him the keys on that fateful July 4th day.
- We ask that the investigation take a hard look at the Petersburg Borough Safety programs, protocols, and the administration of them and identify the failures and weaknesses that contributed to the deaths of these young women. Recommendations should be included to strengthen weaknesses in the safety program.
- We ask that the Borough Assembly become formally involved in oversight of the Petersburg Borough Safety program. The Municipal Code should be changed to require that the Borough Assembly be informed of all accidents and incidents and that an Assembly member be assigned to an accident review team. All Borough employees, including the Borough Manager should have safety included as a factor in their performance evaluations. The Borough Managers responsibilities should be clearly defined.

Since the death of our daughter, we have been met with a wall of silence from the Borough. We have seen no changes from the Borough in response to these deaths.

We are not enemies of the Borough, we are part of it. We ask that the Borough Assembly make available any and all existing information regarding this incident to the public. We hope that this includes any actions that the Borough took to investigate their role in these deaths and corrective action if any.

We love this community. We have lived here for 32 years. It is a wonderful place to bring up children. We encouraged our daughter Molly to work for Petersburg Borough Parks and Recreation never realizing that she was in mortal danger.

We should have faith in our local government that their first priority is to keep their citizens safe. We think that can be achieved through the transparency of a third-party review of the events leading up to July 4, 2016 and the events since then.

We and this community need and deserve answers as to how this tragedy happened, so it can be prevented in the future.

Respectfully,

*R.D. Parks*

*Madonna Parks*

RD and Madonna Parks