Haines Borough

BOROUGH ASSEMBLY ACTION REQUEST

DATE: January 9, 2014

TO: Borough Assembly

FROM: Haines Borough Planning Commission

Re: Public Water and Sewer Connections in HBC 18.100.092

RATIONALE:

In light of many discussions, including the Comprehensive Plan's future growth map and especially during the St. Clair utility issue, the Planning Commission has found the current code to be inadequate in resolving questions that arose regarding when a property owner should be connected to the public utility and does not address if or when a property owner with viable water and sewer systems could or should be exempted from a "forced" connection (especially after an investment that could range from $20,000 to $40,000).

Also, complicating this matter is the individual system development over time that predates annexation/consolidation as well as issues related to the era in which some of these neighborhoods were served by a competing utility (who did not have 100% connection enforcement) that is now owned by the municipality.

Additionally, Haines Borough code dictates that property owners will be required to connect to the public utility within six months when public sanitary sewer and/or water service becomes available. This is not currently enforced and if attempted at this point, could create an untenable situation for the Borough.

PLANNING COMMISSION REQUEST: for the Borough Assembly to focus on TWO policy issues:

1. The Borough should develop a policy that would allow for the municipality to participate in the extension of water and sewer mains. This policy would include a mechanism to recoup this investment over time as new connections are initiated.
2. The Borough should develop a policy that would exempt current property owners with VIABLE water and sewer systems from being forced into a Local Improvement District (LID) or connection to the municipal utility. This policy should examine whether it is possible to incorporate a definition that this "exemption" is actually a "deferral" that allows the current system to be "amortized" over a period of time (typical life-cycle cost of the infrastructure) after which time the property would then be connected to the public system.

Such policies would give planners and staff the tools needed to guide the growth of neighborhoods and the utilities that serve those properties. Equally important, the Borough would then be able to effectively plan, finance and construct future extensions in an orderly manner as well as provide regulations that can be enforceable.

SUBMITTED BY _____ (signature)

Rob Goldberg
Planning Commission Chairman