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**To:** Michelle Webb  
**Subject:** RE: Sundberg Heliport Conditional Use Proposal

**From:** [Weishahn](#)

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**Sent:** Wednesday, February 12, 2014 7:01 PM

**Subject:** Sundberg Heliport Conditional Use Proposal

To Haines Planning Commissioners:

The issue of a heliport on this same private property on Chilkat Lake Road has been before the Planning Commission and Assembly in 2012. A conditional use permit for a heliport in this residential area was reviewed and denied by both bodies. Nothing has changed about the location Mr. Sundberg is proposing for a heliport. The negative impacts to residents, wildlife, property values, and risks to salmon streams from potential fuel spills in the area still exist. While the applicant goes to great lengths about the business plan for this property, little is said about the appropriateness of locating a heliport there. I have included below an excerpt regarding heliports from the current Comprehensive Plan. While the idea of developing a heliport on public land at some future time is beyond the scope of this discussion, the plan suggests that no additional heliports on private land are desirable.

Heliski companies can use 3 approved heliports: the Haines Airport (lower Chilkat Valley), 18 Mile (mid Chilkat Valley), and 33 Mile (upper Chilkat Valley). The location being proposed does not eliminate any of these heliports, nor is it located near all of the available heliski areas. If this CUP is granted, the Planning Commission will be setting a precedent for each heliski company having its own heliport. The proposed heliport is redundant and all heliski areas can be reached from the approved heliports.

I have also included an excerpt below from former Manager Mark Earnest's recommendation to the Planning Commission when Mr. Sundberg applied for a CUP in January 2012. Earnest described 3 factors that, in his opinion, did not meet the criteria for issuing a CUP. He refers to the old Comprehensive Plan in his discussion, and concludes that, "Regardless of where the proposed use is located on the property, I do not believe development of a heliport at this location is consistent with and in harmony with surrounding uses which do not produce equivalent noise and levels of activity."

This property is still an inappropriate location for a heliport and the CUP application should be denied to protect residents, property values and the public welfare.

Carolyn Weishahn

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**Comprehensive Plan, September 2012, p. 94-95**

In 2011 one business proposed development of a heliport on its land on the Chilkat Lake Road, which raised concerns about neighborhood character, noise and safety. The planning commission and assembly denied the permit based on health, safety and welfare issues, but this raised a larger question of whether a heliport on public land should be developed to consolidate helicopter activity. To effectively plan for future heliport use the Borough should work to establish a criteria that clearly defines the public health, safety and welfare issues it desires to address, define the characteristics a suitable site would have such as acceptable noise levels and distance from residences, systematically evaluate possible sites, and if a site is identified and developed, offer incentives (e.g. increased skier days) and disincentives to encourage its use.

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**Manager's Report – SEABA Conditional Use Permit for Heliport**

January 19, 2012

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Under HBC 18.50.040, there are 8 factors to be considered in deciding whether to grant a conditional use permit.

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1. The use is so located on the site as to avoid undue noise and other nuisances and dangers.

I believe this condition has not been met and that heliport operations at this particular site are a use which produces undue noise as that phrase is used in the CUP criteria no matter where the proposed use is located on the property. I do not believe the Esker Ridge will provide sufficient sound dampening for adjacent residential properties.

4. The specific development scheme of the use is consistent and in harmony with the comprehensive plan and surrounding land uses.

The Borough's comprehensive plan did not directly address the issue of siting of heliports within the Borough but did conclude heliski companies like SEABA should be "encouraged to develop areas away from residences through creation of a commercial recreation zone where heliports associated with heli-skiing operations would be a use by right". Comprehensive Plan p.72. The proposed conditional use is inconsistent with encouraging heliski operations to be located "away from residences" as this operation would be literally next door to residential property. Regardless of where the proposed use is located on the property, I do not believe development of a heliport at this location is consistent with and in harmony with surrounding uses which do not produce equivalent noise and levels of activity.

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5. The granting of the conditional use will not be harmful to the public safety, health or welfare.

I believe granting the conditional use will be harmful to the general health and welfare of the community by introducing a use disturbing the peace and quiet valued by nearby property owners. I have considered whether dispersion of impacts associated with SEABA operations amongst 3 rather than two locations is an improvement to public welfare. In my opinion it is better for the public welfare to concentrate impacts rather than disperse them amongst an expanding number of permitted heliport sites.

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The factors listed above mean that I [Mark Earnest] am unable to find that 3 of the required 8 findings all of which must be met in order to grant a proposed conditional use have been met.

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