

9/21/2022

To: Mayor Olerud and the Haines Borough Assembly  
From: Gershon Cohen

Re: September 22<sup>nd</sup> Special Assembly Meeting

Dear Mayor Olerud and Borough Assembly Members,

Please set aside for the moment the differing opinions on what the dock rebuild/expansion should or should not be, or will or will not do. A far more fundamental question needs to be asked, and answered, first.

There is clearly a presumption that a majority of the community still supports the concept of rebuilding Lutak Dock. The fact is no one knows. I believe such a majority sentiment existed a few years ago, but that position was based on the belief that the dock was failing and we could lose our ability to get food, goods and fuel into Haines. Since the RORO dock was put into service that imminent threat has been eliminated and there has been no effort to revisit the question of overall community support, so the answer to whether or not it exists is unknown.

Over a year ago we were told there would be town halls to explore questions of support and purpose for a major dock rebuild. They did not happen. We were told last winter the Lutak Dock Working Group would be reconstituted with broader inclusion of community members. That did not happen. A Borough Assembly meeting, even a special meeting, is not an adequate substitute for those venues. A town hall would allow for discussion and debate; a free flow of ideas and positions. The Working Group could have supported far greater dialogue and engagement. At the meeting tomorrow night, which I assume will be conducted under Robert's Rules of Order, community members will get three minutes to speak on the record. It may satisfy the legal requirement for affording public participation, but it will not satisfy the intent.

I believe it is the duty of the Assembly to act in accordance with the community's majority will. No one in Haines can divine whether a majority of the community still supports a dock rebuild now that we have a functional docking facility. Decisions of such magnitude to the future of the entire community should not be made without knowing where a majority of the community stands. Please table any attempt to make a decision that will bind us to any procedural or financial outcome until the broader community has been able to truly be heard.

Sincerely,

Gershon Cohen