



HAINES BOROUGH, ALASKA
P.O. BOX 1209, HAINES, ALASKA 99827

A K Annette Kreitzer, Borough Manager
907.766.6404 akreitzer@haines.ak.us

MEMO

TO: Assembly Member Debra Schnabel

DATE: October 28, 2023

RE: Assembly Work Session – Tax Assessments

You asked that I provide some background into the selection of Michael Dahle as the contract assessor for the Haines Borough beginning in November 2022.

I have provided his November 2022 proposal for assessment services, which includes his resume of experience. The allegation that he is not qualified to be an assessor is untrue. In the State of Alaska, there is no licensing for assessors, other than a business license (same for the Haines Borough). Although some municipalities require certain levels of certification with the Alaska Association of Assessing Officers, the Haines Borough does not. The fact that Mr. Dahle has let his professional certification as an assessor expire with the AAAO or in Washington has no bearing on his abilities or qualification as an assessor for the Haines Borough. We submitted Mr. Dahle's work proposal to State Assessor Joseph Caissie for his review before proceeding to initiate discussions with Mr. Dahle.

Following the death of former assessor Dean Olsen on September 10, 2022, I began reaching out September 12 to our IT contractor Austin Neal and Seasonal Property Data Collector Scott Hansen to begin to put together a plan forward for the Lands/Assessment Department. I spoke with former State Assessor Steve Van Sant regarding any recommendations he might have for completing the assessment tasks. There are a limited number of people who do this in Alaska. Chief Fiscal Officer Jila Stuart who works closely with the lands department on tax and assessment issues also began researching our options. She and I touched base with current State Assessor Joe Caissie.

These were the options I discussed internally with staff and former Mayor Olerud:

Appraisal Company of Alaska (Mike Renfro and team) –At the time, there were only three contract Assessors working in Alaska, Appraisal Company of Alaska being the biggest. I have attached an excerpt from the 2021 Alaska Taxable showing that they were the contract assessor for 11 communities in Alaska including Petersburg, Wrangell, and Cordova. Appraisal Company of Alaska uses the MARS CAMA (computer assisted mass appraisal) system we use so they are familiar with our software. The downside was, they didn't have a lot of availability. They said they had no one available to do field work this year but if we had local people doing field work they could be responsible for creating the values and dealing with the appeals. Much of this would have been done remotely –though they acknowledged they would need to be here for appeals. They sounded willing to help us out but not eager to take on additional work at that late stage in the process. We wondered if by taking us on they would be spreading themselves thin.

Michael Dahle – Michael Dahle was the former Deputy Assessor for CBJ. He retired from CBJ in June of 2022, but he reached out to let us know he was available. Michael Dahle worked for us in the past. He had worked previously in the Haines Borough as an employee of a previous contract assessor and through that work was known to several current Haines Borough staff including Scott Hansen and Jila Stuart. He was remembered as being knowledgeable, conscientious, and good with numbers and databases. His home base would stay in Washington but he said he could come up either a few times for a larger block of time or maybe come up once a month for shorter blocks. Additionally, he seemed to have time for us.

Horan and Company – Horan and Company was our first choice. They currently only have one client in Alaska but had previously been the contract assessor for other communities including Skagway. They were known for being thorough, detailed, accurate, and honest. They developed the CAMA system we use, MARS. They are a partner with us since they still support the software and Dean worked closely with them. Unfortunately they are trying to get out of doing contract assessing work and are just focusing on continuing to develop and support MARS.

John Wurst – John Wurst is a former Haines Borough Assessor. He was employed from September 2006 to October 2009. He reached out to say he's available to work as Assessor. We were uncertain about his exposure to the CAMA system which we are using now.

Canary & Associates – They have two contracts in Alaska, Skagway (recently new) & Pelican. The Borough had a one-year contract with Jim Canary as contract Assessor in 2013. We hired him at the last minute, and there was a lot of local consternation about that tax roll (with 420 appeals and a resulting visit from the State Assessor). We have not reached out to them to gauge availability.

Put out an RFP – This would have taken valuable time – with assessments due by January 1, we would lose time waiting for responses. There was a lot of information that respondents to an RFP would want to know which would be difficult to produce – such as “is most of your field work finished?” Good questions perhaps. There are a limited number of people who do this in Alaska.

