



City of Coffman Cove

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Dear POWCAC Membership:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Prince of Wales Island Borough Charter. We appreciate the considerable time and effort that has been put forth to prepare the charter.

The Coffman Cove City Council reviewed the draft charter during three workshops and one regular council meeting. The Council compared the provisions of the charter with existing and possible future priorities of the community of Coffman Cove.

A summary of Council comments are as follows:

1. Section 2.02 - Election Districts

There is no safeguard in the charter for small communities to make sure they have a vote on the assembly. Coffman Cove would like to see the borough assembly operate similar to POWCAC with each community holding an assembly seat and a provision for new communities as they incorporate. Coffman Cove supports the “one community, one vote” model.

There is no “opt out” mechanism for communities that decide they do not want to be part of the Prince of Wales Island Borough.

2. Article 11 - Taxation

The Charter specifies that taxation requires approval of a majority of the voters. This should be changed to super-majority.

In general, members of the City Council are concerned about the impact that borough property taxes would have on residents. There should be a provision that prevents the borough from seizing property for lack of property tax payment.

3. Article 8 - Local Schools

Every community with a school, should hold a seat on the school board with a provision for adding and subtracting seats as schools are opened and/or closed.

The Council expressed concerns about the Borough's ability to close schools. There should be a provision written into the charter to prevent the Borough from closing any school that meets the minimum number of students to qualify for State funding.

4. Section 9.18 - Return of Funds to Communities

The Draft Borough Charter allows community funds (PILT, Revenue Sharing, Timber Receipts, etc.) to be retained by the Borough but may be returned to the communities by a method prescribed by Borough ordinance. All funds should be returned to the communities. There should be a provision in the charter detailing how and when those funds shall be returned.

5. Article 10 - Borrowing

Coffman Cove is opposed to allowing the Borough to borrow money, however, there should be language in the charter allowing the borough to establish a line of credit that could be used to complete projects which are funded by reimbursable grant programs.

Section 11.03 allows the borough to impose a property tax without going to a vote of the people, provided that the property tax is to make principal or interest payments on borough debt. Alaska Statute 29.45.100 allows the Borough to do this. If borrowing is allowed, the Borough Charter should specifically disallow forced property tax to pay for borough debt.

6. Section 2.11 - Treasurer/ Financial Manager

The charter mentions a Borough Clerk but makes no mention of a Borough Treasurer. The Treasurer plays an important role. There should be a provision in the charter stating that there will be a Treasurer appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by assembly.

7. Article 7 (Planning)

According to Article 7 of the Draft Charter, the Borough would assume all planning and platting powers. The municipalities should have the option to retain their powers.

8. Section 9.13 (4) - School Monies

The draft charter would allow borough district school monies to be maintained in the borough general fund. School monies should be maintained in a separate fund.

9. Section 9.13 (4) - Borough Administrator

All references to a borough administrator position should be removed from the charter to remain consistent with a strong mayor form of government.

In closing, the council's review of the proposed home rule charter caused some members to question whether or not a home rule borough would be the best form of borough for Prince of Wales Island. Maybe we should reconsider what type of borough to form.

Sincerely,

Perry Olson
Mayor