The Chamber of Commerce is helping to announce the establishment of a website for the Prince of Wales Community Advisory Council (POWCAC), now accessible at [www.powcac.org](http://www.powcac.org). POWCAC representatives have been meeting regularly since 1989, putting together a united front on topics such as transportation/DOT funding requests; and lending regional support for grants needed by individual communities. The Prince of Wales Chamber of Commerce is an active member of POWCAC.

There has been much controversy over the past few months, regarding POWCAC’s borough study – and so this website was created to improve public access to the information being gathered. POWCAC got involved in studying the borough question, several years ago, due to island-wide concerns about boroughs forming and annexing land around POW, the prospect of one or more mines opening on POW, reduced state and federal funding for general government and school districts. Our concern was that if another borough chose to annex unpopulated areas of our island, would we get to have a vote on it?

POWCAC members wanted to be sure that Prince of Wales resources benefit those of us on Prince of Wales Island. ONE POSSIBLE WAY to ensure this happens would be to create a borough of our own. And could there be other benefits to creating a borough - school funding, regional waste management, emergency services? Why have other boroughs in Alaska been formed – is there a benefit?

POWCAC understood that any borough formation would require a vote of the local population. But before a vote of yes or no would be possible, we’d need to see what a borough would look like. And to create the “BEST-POW-BOROUGH” option, to compare to a “NO-BOROUGH” option, we’d need to do lots of information gathering. And we’d need to spend a lot of time in order to get input from all of our individual community and tribal members. This process was started several years ago and is still on-going. POWCAC is nowhere NEAR asking people whether they want a borough or not. We are only trying to design the BEST-POW-BOROUGH, with everyone’s input.

What would a borough look like? Will our school districts be better funded as a borough or staying as individual districts? What management style will work best? How are all people on the island represented on a borough? Who and how many can be elected to run the borough? Let’s take the time to get everyone’s input on how we can make this the best borough design.

So far, POWCAC members determined that a Home Rule Borough would be the preferred type of borough for our island. This is because the State doesn’t dictate so many rules for this type of borough. We can design a more ‘minimal’ borough to meet our needs. But this form of borough requires that a Charter be written. POWCAC has gathered information from other boroughs as a starting point to try to write a Charter for our BEST-POW-BOROUGH. Now is the time to give your input on the writing of this charter. Please read the charter on the POWCAC website and submit your comments this month. Pick it apart -- tell us what parts you like and don’t like. How will this affect your business? How will this affect your neighborhood? What can we add or change to make it a positive thing for you? That’s our goal.

Other information gathering that will need to take place in the future will be designing a budget - this will be an area to figure out what minimal services will be provided, how much they’ll cost, and how they will be funded. We’ll try to figure out ways to design a budget without a dreaded property tax. Can it be done? We won’t know until we try.

Help POWCAC plan a BEST-POW-BOROUGH. Don’t worry about voting for or against a borough. We’re not anywhere close to asking that question. And we won’t even proceed with that question if we don’t see a lot of positives in the borough we design.

Please take time during the month of January to review the borough charter at <http://www.powcac.org/borough-study/> and mail your comments on how it can be improved to the address shown there. Please also send a copy of your comments to our Chamber office by email info@princeofwalescoc.org or mail PO Box 490, Klawock, AK 99925. We look forward to hearing from you.