

PRESS RELEASE



STATEMENT FROM VICE CHAIR WEDDLETON REGARDING THE ADMINISTRATION'S ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE OLD ALASKA CLUB

November 25, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Assembly Vice Chair John Weddleton, representing South Anchorage, Girdwood, and Turnagain Arm, today released the following statement:

"I support the Administration's decision to pass on purchasing the old Alaska Club as a homeless shelter and engagement center. We heard loud and clear from the public that they wanted an honest assessment of the building purchases proposed in AO 2020-66(S) and an open mind towards other more suitable locations. It is clear the administration heard that and worked in that spirit. I am very encouraged that during the due diligence period they remain open to alternatives as well.

When COVID-19 hit, we were backed into a corner. Anchorage's existing shelters significantly cut back their occupancy to meet recommended guidelines for a pandemic. That left hundreds of people inevitably out on the street. The homeless situation we knew before COVID-19 became far more dire. The administration put together, with amazing speed, shelter at the Sullivan and Ben Boeke Arenas. But these are not a long-term solution. The Sullivan arena is a public building that is intended for other uses, and the operating costs of running it as a shelter are not sustainable. In their search for long term alternatives, the administration is thinking beyond housing people in 'congregate shelter' and looking at a package of shelter and services that would lead to more stability, far greater chance that residents could regain a housed and independent life, and ultimately lower costs for Anchorage taxpayers.

The need for more shelter remains and will continue. I appreciate the administration's steady work to resolve this while also watching out for the best use of public funds."

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