August 3, 2016

Girdwood Board of Supervisors

Dear Supervisors:

 As you are aware, Alyeska Resort believes that the better policing option to transition into a Girdwood police model is to contract with the Alaska State Troopers (“AST”) and not the Whittier Police Department. While we acknowledge that Whittier has shown good faith efforts to negotiate a contract with Girdwood, we do not believe that that should be the reason to choose the poorer of the two options. In an effort to understand what AST is offering, Mandy Hawes, Diana Livingston, Dick Rosston and I met with Public Safety Commissioner Walt Monegan, Colonel James Cockrell and Major Andy Greenstreet yesterday, August 1 for a couple of hours. The result of that meeting is that the Resort does not believe that the Community of Girdwood really understands what the AST is offering and what issues will be created by Girdwood contracting with Whittier. Following are a few of the facts we learned from our meeting:

1. If a contract were entered into with AST, AST would assign six (6) Troopers the Girdwood Post, three (3) of the Troopers would be Bureau of Highway Patrol Troopers and three (3) Troopers would be general Troopers; the Girdwood post at the Tesoro would stay open;
2. AST would commit to a three (3) year contract at $620,000 a year. There would not be additional charges for serious crime investigation, no additional costs for prisoner transport, fuel, cars, or helicopter, the $620,000 would be for essentially for salaries and benefits and cost to keep the Post in Girdwood open;
3. Contracting with AST would make available to Girdwood all AST resources, including serious crime investigations, helicopter, and crime lab. If Whittier had to pay for these AST services, if offered by AST, the cost of a Whittier contract would significantly exceed the $615,000 per year contract price;
4. If Whittier contracts with Girdwood, AST would likely provide support to Whittier for investigative services, including serious crimes, for only two (2) years, but after one (1) year, AST would expect Girdwood to contribute to the costs of those services up to the maximum of the mill levy cap;
5. A contract with AST would result in at least the status quo of service, but likely improved services. While AST could not commit to a Girdwood response time, AST would commit to a greater presence in the community at places (including school) that the community would request and have after hour Troopers on call in South Anchorage 24/7. AST is willing to engage in community policing activities such as coming to the school and helping establish a Neighborhood Watch;
6. The training that Troopers receive is better than the training a Whittier police officer receives. While all officers in Alaska are required to attend one of three police academies in Alaska, Troopers have an additional training period of (3) three weeks and are provided better hands-on experience more quickly before being assigned to a rural area;
7. Because of the way Alaska law is written, a police department could hire anyone with a modicum of training as a police officer and give that person a year to go through an academy. It would be possible for a police department to hire seasonally and hire persons as police officers that don’t get through the academy and then lay them off before the end of the year period;
8. If AST lays-off the three (3) Troopers and then the Community of Girdwood attempts to go back to AST because of a problem with Whittier or an early termination of a Whittier contract, it would be unlikely that AST could make the same offer because AST would have to hire and train three (3) Troopers which could take up to 18 months;
9. Significant concerns with a Whittier contract include, but aren’t limited to, 911 calls and dispatch, prisoner containment and prisoner transport, costs of future serious crime investigations; and
10. AST is willing to commit to what it offered previously and enter into a three (3) year contract. Whittier apparently wants to be able to terminate upon thirty (30) days’ notice.

For these and other reasons, Alyeska Resort believes that contracting with AST for three (3) years while Girdwood investigates whether it can establish its own police department is the better option. There are just too many uncertainties with a contract with Whittier. A draft of a proposed Whittier contract was only received by the Municipality of Anchorage attorney on August 1, 2016. Yet, it is expected that the contract will be in final form to be approved by the Whittier City Council by August 10, 2016. Whittier does not have the resources or the stability of AST. Once a mutually acceptable contract with Whittier is agreed to, the AST option is likely lost. While there are a vocal few who have determined that a contract with Whittier is the only option, Alyeska Resort believes that the AST option has not been sufficiently presented to the Community of Girdwood. At a minimum, it is our belief that there should be a properly noticed town meeting where all of the facts concerning a proposed Whittier contract and the AST option can be fully laid out and another vote taken.

Sincerely,

 J. Randall Call

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 Vice President & General Counsel

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