

## 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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