

Municipality of Anchorage

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Suzanne LaFrance Mayor



GIRDWOOD VALLEY SERVICE AREA BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Mike Edgington & Jennifer Wingard, Co-Chairs
Briana Sullivan, Brian Burnett. Kellie Okonek

Resolution 2025-21

Of the Girdwood Board of Supervisors

RESOLUTION REGARDING THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF UNIFICATION AND LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE STATUS OF GIRDWOOD WITHIN THE UNIFIED BOROUGH

WHEREAS, the cities of Anchorage, Glen Alps and Girdwood were incorporated respectively in 1920, June 1961, and September 1961, and the Greater Anchorage Area Borough (GAAB) was established in 1964 to oversee regional-level services such as planning; and

WHEREAS, the City of Anchorage formed a commission, 1969-1971, to draft the proposal for unification and the ballot measure to be put in front of the voters, and the original proposal was rejected by the electorate; and

WHEREAS, a new charter commission was formed and returned with a streamlined, inclusive version that went to the voters in 1975; and

WHEREAS, after a vote across the Greater Anchorage Area Borough on September 9th, 1975, the charter was approved, with the cities of Anchorage, Girdwood, Glen Alps and the Borough dissolved, replaced by the Unified Municipality of Anchorage; and

WHEREAS, Girdwood voters rejected city dissolution and borough unification, by a vote of 82% against and 18% in favor; and

WHEREAS, the push for unification was primarily motivated by duplication of services within the growing urban core of Anchorage and jurisdictional challenges at the boundary of the City of Anchorage and the Greater Anchorage Area Borough; and

WHEREAS, the Preamble to the Charter of the Municipality of Anchorage states:

“We, the people of Anchorage, in order to eliminate waste and duplication in government, to achieve common goals, to support individual rights, to form a more responsive government, and to secure maximum local control of local affairs, hereby establish this Charter.”; and

WHEREAS, the charter contains a 10 point Bill of Rights, and with number 8 stating:

“The right to a locally directed, ongoing planning process that is based on the community’s goals, objectives, and policies for the future”; and

WHEREAS, notwithstanding the preamble's promise of "maximum local control of local affairs", a Unified Municipality is identical in every way to a Home Rule Borough except it removes the right for a community to organize a local city government; and

WHEREAS, in the decades since 1975, the community of Girdwood has seen a substantial improvement in infrastructure, including developed roads, a wastewater system, city water service to the eastern part of the valley and natural gas service; and

WHEREAS, the improvements to Girdwood's infrastructure and a stable local government have provided a fertile environment for economic investment and development, including a world-class recreation destination; and

WHEREAS, the Municipality of Anchorage Charter provides for Service Areas which can establish local services paid by local tax levies; and

WHEREAS, Girdwood Valley Service Area was established shortly after the 1975 Unification to provide local services similar to those of the dissolved City of Girdwood, and

WHEREAS, Girdwood Valley Service Area now provides additional services including Roads & Drainage, Parks & Recreation, Fire, Police, and Economic Development and Housing Support services, all right sized to the needs of the Girdwood community; and

WHEREAS, the Girdwood Valley Service Area is overseen by a five-member elected Board of Supervisors; and

WHEREAS, through the Girdwood Board of Supervisors, the community of Girdwood has developed its own unique solutions to numerous problems faced by the community, such as the 2015 unilateral withdrawal of Alaska State Troopers, who were replaced by a Girdwood voter-supported partnership with the City of Whittier to provide police services; and

WHEREAS, Girdwood has recently completed the Girdwood Comprehensive Plan through an extensive, multi year, community effort. And, the community has put forward locally based solutions to our housing needs in spite of pushback from the previous and current Assembly.

WHEREAS, metropolitan areas across the lower 48, such as the Indianapolis region, have solved similar governance problems using municipal structures that combine the county and city government in the urban core to prevent duplication while allowing local city government in smaller surrounding communities, hence moving decision making closer to the citizens impacted.

THEREFORE, the Girdwood Board of Supervisors RESOLVES

1) to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Municipality of Anchorage by acknowledging the many successes of the unification experiment, while recognizing that the goals of unification were centered on solving problems experienced by the growing urban core rather than the limitations on local self-determination imposed upon more distant, unique communities unwillingly annexed into the Municipality, and

2) to urge the executive and legislative bodies of the Municipality of Anchorage to uphold the Anchorage Municipal Charter Preamble to "secure maximum local control of local affairs" and as promised in the Bill of Rights by devolving maximal powers, up to and including local policy and decision-making powers, to communities such as Girdwood, and

3) to amend Anchorage Municipal Code Title 21 to designate GBOS as a review body allowing it to initiate text amendments to Title 21, and

4) to adjust the municipal administrative organization to allow the Girdwood Valley Service Area land management authority over property owned by the Municipality located within Girdwood Valley, possibly by making the Girdwood Valley Service Area a municipal department

- 5) to work towards treating the community of Girdwood through GBOS, its locally elected governmental body, as a trusted partner in the matters and concerns of Girdwood, not merely as an advisory body, and
- 6) to support a future advisory vote by the community of Girdwood on moving towards greater self-determination within the unified borough or some other local government structure.

PASSED AND APPROVED by a vote of 5 in favor and 0 opposed this 15th day of December 2025.

Mike Edgington

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GBOS Co-Chair

Jennifer Wingard

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