



May 22, 2017

CBJ Manager's Office  
155 S. Seward St.  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Mr. Manager,

The Juneau Coalition on Housing and Homelessness and its partner agencies seek clarification regarding CBJ's policies pertaining to Marine Park, homelessness in Juneau, public safety, and a coordinated approach to dealing with homelessness in Juneau.

On May 16th, Coalition agencies learned of the CBJ plans to close Marine Park at night from KTOO, a public radio station. Throughout the day, conflicting information regarding CBJ's approach to the park was received by Coalition partners from JPD and your office. Individuals who are experiencing homelessness and who are sleeping in Marine Park have been receiving conflicting information as well. Just last week, the individuals were told that they can sleep in the park between the hours of 11PM to 7AM.

While CBJ aims to drive people toward alternatives such as the Thane Campground<sup>1</sup> by closing the Marine Park at night, CBJ camping restrictions are serving to redistribute homeless camps without addressing the underlying problems. As a result, more camps will move into residential neighborhoods, garages, public sidewalks, and private buildings. In addition to the fact that the Thane campground capacity does not meet the current level of need identified in recent homeless census results, CBJ is encouraging people to walk on an unlit road that lacks a sidewalk, to a dark, non-ADA compliant campground, away from services, with less access to public safety resources in the event of emergency. Campers are reasonably concerned about the danger of rape, physical injury, and inaccessibility for people with mobility issues.

Homelessness is a complex and multi-faceted issue that is becoming more prominent throughout the world and the United States as income disparity increases, investment in the public and public infrastructure decreases, and social safety nets remain flat funded or disappear. While homelessness is difficult to grasp, it is not difficult to determine our response to best address homelessness. Communities must coordinate, collaborate, and communicate in order to stay ahead of the issues, ensure public safety, and make a positive difference. In Juneau, again, there was no consultation, discussion, or warning to agencies serving individuals who are experiencing homelessness prior to announcing the enforcement of the Marine Park closure times. Decisions made quickly, in a silo, will not yield meaningful, desired results and instead are often divisive to the community and make tackling homelessness and poverty more difficult.

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<sup>1</sup> Resneck, Jacob. "Juneau's homeless population prefers Marine Park over Thane campground." *KTOO* 17 May 2017. Web. 18 May 2017.

The Coalition seeks to consult with the CBJ on issues regarding housing and homelessness in the future. The Coalition asks you to reconsider your approach to the current situation in Marine Park, and to begin the discussion about best practices to end homelessness, specifically coordinated entry, rapid re-housing, substance treatment options, and adequate and directed investment in agencies that address housing and homelessness.

The Juneau Coalition on Housing and Homelessness consists of 29 of Juneau's continuum of care organizations. The Coalition requests:

- (1) Clarification as to CBJ's policies with respect to Marine Park, and where individuals experiencing homelessness may lawfully be during the day and nighttime hours;
- (2) CBJ examine the public safety concerns associated with asking individuals to access and use the Thane campground as the "designated option"<sup>2</sup> in light of the camping ordinance and enforcement of Marine Park's closure;
- (3) CBJ view the Coalition and its members as partners in addressing issues related to homelessness. The Coalition appreciates the CBJ's desire for the downtown area to be a safe and welcoming place for all and requests the City consult with the Coalition on how to achieve that goal without jeopardizing Juneau's homeless citizens by pushing them to further away from access to assistance, food, water and law enforcement;
- (4) Representatives of CBJ meet with Coalition partners to discuss strategies to bring proven best practices, including an adequate number of permanent supportive housing units, rapid re-housing dollars, treatment options, youth homelessness interventions, education, and coordinated entry to Juneau and to public and private agencies who address these issues;
- (5) Assign the topic of homelessness to an existing Assembly subcommittee or a new Assembly committee. Consistent with the Assembly's stated desire to "keep the conversation going" upon passage of the No-Camping Ordinance amendment, there is a need to formalize these conversations in the Assembly's work plan. This committee will receive consistent reports from the local and statewide homeless coalitions with the goal of becoming more familiar with the current community needs, service gaps, and nationwide best practices to end homelessness. The Juneau Coalition on Housing and Homeless is scheduled to meet on June 15<sup>th</sup> at noon at Gruening Park. We would welcome an Assembly Liaison at this meeting.

The City, the Juneau Coalition on Housing and Homeless, and the entire community can help improve the lives of people experiencing homelessness. Let's continue the conversation together as partners, with the goal of finding meaningful, long-term solutions.

Sincerely,

Mandy Cole and Gus Marks  
Co-Chairs, Juneau Coalition on Housing and Homelessness

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<sup>2</sup> Resneck, 2017.