

Correspondence



RABBIT CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL (RCCC) A Forum for Respectful Communication & Community Relations



1057 West Fireweed Lane, Suite 100 / Anchorage, AK 99503

January 26, 2023

To: Anchorage Assembly Members, Girdwood Board of Supervisors, and Holtan Hills Housing Advisory Committee

Subject: Request to suspend the Holtan Hills land disposal, AO 2022-103 (S1)

At its monthly meeting on January 9, 2023, Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) heard testimony regarding the proposed Holtan Hills land disposal and development agreement, AO 2022-103. Information was presented by three Girdwood community residents who have been active regarding this issue over the past year or more (Jennifer Wingard, Girdwood Board of Supervisors Public Safety representative; Krystal Hoke; and Grace Pleasants). RCCC members asked detailed questions which were answered by the Girdwood residents.

Based on the information we have seen, RCCC shares concerns expressed by Girdwood residents, and by the Girdwood Board of Supervisors. These are that the Holtan Hills development will not meaningfully address the critical shortage of affordable resident and worker housing, nor provide community or public benefits in proportion with the 400 acres of public land to be sold or transferred. Moreover, the appearance of several hundred Girdwood residents expressing these concerns at a December 2022 Assembly meeting, during a record snowstorm, is strong evidence that the process has thus far failed to incorporate community concerns into the proposed land disposal.

We understand that the Assembly has submitted a Substitute Ordinance, AO 2022-103 S(1). This substitute ordinance does not seem to remedy Girdwood's concerns. In addition, the proposed profit to the Heritage Land Bank appears to be a very low return for a large tract of land in a community with the highest residential real estate prices in the Municipality. Apparently other ski communities have been able to positively address their similar needs for worker and resident housing with master plans and aggressive partnering with local housing authorities and private developers (e.g., see Breckinridge, CO [Master Plan](#) pp. 71-79).

RCCC supports a meaningful public process: that includes timely information for the public, open dialogue, and inclusion of community priorities in the final project or policies. The residents and Girdwood Board of Supervisors are very critical of the lack of an open and meaningful public planning process for this proposed land transfer; there has apparently been disregard for their concerns and a lack of compromise.

Rabbit Creek Community Council voted to submit the following comments to the Anchorage Assembly, by a vote of 14 yeas, 0 nays, and 1 abstention:

Rabbit Creek Community Council requests the Anchorage Assembly table or suspend the Holtan Hills land disposal, A0 2022-103 and 103 (S1) for the following reasons:

1. Failure of the Municipal agencies to follow a clear, open, and timely public process.
2. Lack of credible appraisals and full and complete disclosures to the public regarding the value of the properties involved.
3. Failure to meaningfully engage the Girdwood Board of Supervisors, residents, and the Holtan Hills Housing Advisory Committee in ways that would allow them to reasonably influence the outcome for the mutual benefit of the community and the Municipality.
4. Failure to deliver a maximum overall benefit for current and future generations, in accordance with the Mission of the Heritage Land Bank and AMC 25.40.025. AMC 25.40 defines the maximum overall benefit from the disposal of Heritage Land Bank lands to include, "non-monetary public benefits, consistent with the municipality's best interests." Specifically, this proposed land disposal fails to substantively contribute affordable resident and worker housing, a need that has long been prioritized by the Girdwood community. Affordable resident and worker housing in Girdwood also serves the public interest of the entire Anchorage area.
5. Confusion about whether the 7-member Heritage Land Bank Advisory Commission could pass Resolution 2022-09 approving the Holtan Hills disposal with a 3-1 vote at their November 17, 2022 meeting (lack of a majority of members).
6. Lack of a master plan, developed and adopted under Municipal Code. The magnitude of the development (eventually totaling a few hundred acres, likely nearly a third of the remaining residential land base in Girdwood) requires community buy-in for all phases of development, and a municipality-proscribed master plan is needed.
7. The public benefits from this public land disposal should not be based only on cash returns. The disposal and development of Municipal land should deliver the greatest good to the public and the Girdwood community, in addition to a fair market price.

As a long-standing practice, RCCC respects the concerns of directly-affected community councils. RCCC urges the Assembly to foster a meaningful role for the GBOS before final action on this disposal.

Sincerely,



Ann Rappoport, Co-chair



John Riley, Co-Chair

cc: Heritage Land Bank
Heritage Land Bank Advisory Commission