

Chairwoman Triem & Task Force Members:

My name is Kimberly Metcalfe. I live at 730 Gold Street in the Basin Road neighborhood. I have testified many times before the Assembly about cruise ship tourism issues, and I am grateful to you for your service on this task force. I must say that I am disappointed that Mayor Weldon chose to appoint only 1 member out of 9 who has any history of activism regarding community problems with cruise ship tourism. Not that I question the integrity of any member of the task force—I would just have preferred to have more community activist members to balance the outcome of your work.

My problems with large-scale cruise ship tourism are numerous. The history of air and water pollution; the steady and intense increase in the numbers of tourists; the nearly complete takeover of South Franklin by industry-owned businesses and the ghost town it creates during the winter; the effect on residential neighborhoods from vehicular and guided tour traffic; helicopter and fixed wing aircraft noise and the danger of aircraft crashes; the increase in small vessel traffic in residential areas like Auke Bay; the harassment of whales by the expanding whale watching fleet; the health and safety issues that affect our hospital and emergency services, and the likelihood of marine accidents that a small town like Juneau cannot possibly handle; and the fact that the industry extorts small businesses that want to do business with them. To begin with, we need to cap the numbers of ships that dock here.

My focus is on my own neighborhood. I want all commercial vehicle traffic and tours shut down on Basin Road. I want the gate that shuts off the road from November 1<sup>st</sup> through April 15<sup>th</sup> to remain closed year-round. In order to effect changes such as the closure of Basin Road and other areas of Juneau to large-scale commercial tourism, I am advocating an idea set forth by my neighbor and long-time friend, Brien Daugherty. Brien suggested the Assembly consider zoning for large-scale cruise ship tourism, just as cities do for any other large-scale industry. It's the best idea I've heard lately, and it needs to be investigated. I will discuss it further with the full Assembly in the near future.

Thank you for your time.



# MY TURN

## Tourism: Out of control in the Last Chance Basin

By KIM METCALFE HELMAR

The tourist season is here, and in the neighborhood I live in, the arrival of between one and seven ships a day from now until the end of the season means the end of life as we know it. A bus will go by the houses on Basin Road every 12-15 minutes most days of the week, depending on ship traffic. If you have ever walked up Basin Road, you know that the road is extremely narrow, wide enough for one-way traffic, has a blind corner, and is in bad need of repair. The trestle bridge going into the Basin has been repaired several times over the last few years, and is still not in the best of condition. The distance from a large bus to some of the houses along the road is only a few feet.

The Basin Road neighbors met several times over the winter with city officials and the new owner of the Salmon Bake, Bob Dindinger, to express our concerns about increased traffic in the area. We reiterated that in over 15 years of talking about increased traffic into the Basin, nothing has been done. In a Dec. 6, 1990, letter to Steve Gilbertson, city lands and resources manager, we suggested the Salmon Bake be relocated to another scenic location along a route designed for bus traffic that would not conflict with pedestrian use, perhaps Cope Park or Eaglecrest. We also suggested that the Basin be declared a park, as well as a city watershed area, and that no commercial traffic be allowed into the Basin.

If our suggestions seem radical, please remember that we have lived with an escalating problem for many years, and our reasoned attempts at change have resulted in increased traffic and an extended lease term for the current owner of the Salmon Bake. Our meetings over the winter were attended by Mr. Gilbertson and city manager Kevin Ritchie. Mr. Gilbertson openly agreed with us, that the Salmon Bake should only have a

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one-year lease because of increasingly stringent Environmental Protection Agency regulations regarding municipal water supplies, and because of the neighborhood's long-term problem with the traffic. Gilbertson recommended a one-year lease to the Assembly lands committee in April, but his recommendation was amended by Assemblymember Davidson to the five-year lease that the Assembly adopted at their May 20 meeting.

I was unaware of the amendment made at the lands committee meeting when I went to the May 20 Assembly meeting. I was stunned to find that the one-year term, which has historically been granted to the Salmon Bake, was extended, with an option for an additional five-year term. We have asked to be notified whenever any business relating to the lease is being considered, but we were not, and we were told that the city is not legally liable for notifying us. I'm sure this is true, but the city staff is well aware of our concerns regarding the lease.

The Salmon Bake was a wonderful small business, but it has grown, and its buses now make about 20 round trips a day. The area comprehensive plan for the Last Chance Basin stipulates that the area be maintained for recreational and watershed use, and that commercial ventures be restricted. A bus into the Basin every 12-15 minutes is hardly restricted commercial traffic. Zoning regulations may be violated by other commercial ventures, including a gold-panning business also run by Mr. Dindinger, in which he uses an ungainly Winnebago-type of van. In addition to the Salmon Bake and gold-panning businesses, add the oth-

er small van tours, taxi-cabs and limousines, and what you have is a circus parading by your house from 7 a.m. until midnight.

There comes a point when we don't have to take it any more. For years we felt that we could live with the Salmon Bake because it was a positive, small, "mom-and-pop" type of business that we could take our relatives to when they visited from out of town, but the Salmon Bake has outgrown the Basin over the past 10 years. Our concerns have been on the record for many, many years now. I believe the city has an obligation to us, because we live here, and an obligation to work with Mr. Dindinger, because they allowed the lease to change hands, to find a new location for the Salmon Bake. The tourists really won't know the difference, as long as their experience is a good one. Cope Park really would be a good compromise. Mr. Dindinger has indicated in a letter to the city that relocating is not an acceptable option, because moving the business to Cope Park or Eaglecrest would "...only move the traffic from one residential area to another." I haven't noticed any houses in either location, and I certainly think road access to these locations is better than Basin Road.

Mr. Dindinger also told the Assembly that he needed a five-year lease to get bank financing for other aspects of his business. He said he needs to show that he has longer than a one-year lease for the bank to finance other ventures. You and I both know that the bank will look at Mr. Dindinger's business operations as a whole, they will look at the fact that the Salmon Bake has been in business for so many years, and they will

look at his track record. And basically, it's not the Assembly's business to worry about Mr. Dindinger's ability to get loans from the bank.

We must stop commercial traffic into the Basin. We have been patient and have worked "through the system" for many years now, to change a problem that gets worse every summer. We will try again at the next regular assembly meeting to have the issue brought back for further review. The neighborhood needs help, though. There are really just a few families who live along the road, and we have gotten nowhere. If you live in the area, or if you use the Basin and would like to see commercial traffic reduced or eliminated, please call an assembly member and voice your concern now. You are also welcome to attend the first meeting of the "Friends of Basin Road" that will be held at my house on Thursday, May 30th at 7 p.m. (730 Gold St., phone 586-2113).

Our goal is to have the Salmon Bake's five-year lease term reduced to the originally proposed one-year term that has been supported by city staff, and we would like to see the city and Mr. Dindinger work toward finding a new location. We would like to eliminate all other commercial traffic into the Basin. If commercial uses of the Basin continue as they have in the past few years, we will lose a unique and beautiful area of our town during the very time when we would like to enjoy it. Stopping commercial traffic up the road doesn't mean that the tourists can't enjoy the area - they may have to "discover" it themselves, or as part of a walking tour, and maybe those of us who live downtown and put up with the crush of tourism on a daily basis from May through September can reserve a little bit of the area for our own enjoyment.

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Kimberly Metcalfe Helmar is a small-business owner. She was born and raised in Juneau and lives in her family home on Basin Road.

may 1991



Aug. 19<sup>th</sup> 1991  
testimony to  
assembly

Mr. Champion, Assemblymembers. My name is Kim Metcalfe Helmar, and I live at 730 Gold Street, in the Basin Road neighborhood. I am here to address ordinance 91-33, relating to the lease of land in the Last Chance Basin to the Gold Creek Salmon Bake. As you are aware, an ordinance was acted on earlier this year at a meeting of the Assembly on May 20, that would have extended the Gold Creek Salmon Bake a five-year lease, with an option for another five years, instead of the one-year lease that has historically been given to the salmon bake. Ordinance 91-33 is a compromise that was worked out between a group called the "Friends of Basin Road," the owners of the salmon bake, and a subcommittee of the Assembly.

The "Friends of Basin Road" are concerned with the increase of vehicular traffic on Basin Road, protection of the city watershed, and the safety of people using Basin Road. Over the years a loose-knit group of neighbors has met at least annually with representatives of the city and the owners of the salmon bake to discuss problems associated with renewal of the one-year lease. Both the neighbors and the salmon bake owners were aware of the problem of increased traffic into the Basin, but in 15 years of discussing the issue no action has been taken to alleviate the problem. Last summer Bob Dindinger bought the Gold Creek Salmon Bake from Bill Leighty, and his attempt to extend the lease to five years, with an option for five more, resulted in the formation of a more organized neighborhood group, and brought the issue to the Assembly's attention.

During a study of traffic patterns on Basin Road that was conducted this spring, the city counted thirty round-trip bus runs on one day (that makes sixty times a bus went by the houses along the road). While this was the highest number of buses in the counting period, it indicates the incredible

amount of traffic that lumbers past houses on the narrow road leading into the basin. Remember that the road leading into the basin is so narrow that when a bus and a car come along at the same time, one must back up to let the other past.

Ordinance 91-33, as written, gives the salmon bake a two-year lease. Although the "Friends of Basin Road" would prefer the historic one-year term, we have agreed that this compromise will work for the present, coupled with the formation of a task force to study the problem, which is part of the proposed ordinance. We have not changed our opinion that the Gold Creek Salmon Bake and an associated gold-panning venture should be relocated to an area that is non-residential. We hope that after the current two-year lease is up, and after further study of the watershed area, we will see the salmon bake relocated and all commercial traffic into the basin prohibited.

Tourism is important to the economy of Juneau, but we cannot lose sight of the fact that the cruise-ship tourist is here for an afternoon's visit, and their visit should not adversely interfere with our quality of life. If they are offered a salmon-bake experience in another setting they will enjoy it just the same. It is my hope that we can work together to prohibit commercial enterprises and traffic in the Last Chance Basin. The result will be a return to a quiet neighborhood for those of us who live there; a quiet place to walk for others who wish to use the road; and protection of Juneau's main water supply. I urge you to pass the ordinance as written.

Thank-you. Are there any questions?

The Fund principal would be established with the revenue from the temporary one percent sales tax proposed in Ordinance No. 91-31 that is not needed to fund the construction of the indoor ice-skating facility. Interest earned on the investment of the Fund principal would be used to inflation proof the Fund and for the operation and maintenance costs outlined above. This will reduce the amount of general fund subsidy necessary for these services and thereby reduce the property tax contribution to recreational facilities and programs. The Fund principal could only be spent in the case of an "emergency" as defined by the Charter and then only with the affirmative vote of at least eight assemblymembers.

Given that this ordinance proposes a Charter amendment, it must be adopted by Friday, August 2 in order to be on the October ballot.

I recommend that:

- (a) this ordinance be introduced and set for public hearing at the special Assembly meeting set for July 29; and
- (b) the Mayor appoint an Assembly committee to review the proposed Charter amendment and the ballot proposition and make recommendations to the Assembly prior to the public hearing on this ordinance.

9. Ordinance No. 91-33

The ordinance repeals and reenacts Ordinance No. 91-18 which authorized the Manager to renew the Gold Creek Salmon Bake lease for an additional five years. This is the result of the concerns expressed by Basin Road residents regarding the length of the lease term and the impacts of traffic on Basin Road. This ordinance reduces the term of the lease from five to two years, adds provisions for protecting the municipal water supply, and requires the Salmon Bake to meet with Basin Road residents at least twice each year to discuss and address their concerns. The ordinance also directs the Manager to prepare a watershed management plan and authorizes the Mayor to appoint a Special Task Force to address issues pertaining to the Last Chance Basin.

I recommend that this ordinance be introduced and set for public hearing at the next regular meeting.