

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Senator Bill Wielechowski

Senator Löki Gale Tobin

Senator Forrest Dunbar



Representative Cliff Groh

Representative Genevieve Mina

Representative Andrew Gray

Representative Stanley Wright

Representative Donna Mears

February 14, 2023

*Sent via email*

The Honorable Dave Bronson  
Mayor, Municipality of Anchorage  
632 West Sixth Avenue  
Anchorage AK 99501

Dear Mayor Bronson:

We were deeply troubled to learn that your administration is considering authorizing campsites for Alaskans experiencing homelessness in Centennial, Russian Jack Springs, and/or Davis Parks in East Anchorage. Not only would such an action be a clear and knowing violation of municipal law, but as the humanitarian crisis at Centennial Park last year sadly demonstrated, it would be unsafe and inhumane for campers and neighboring residents. We hope you agree that last year's experience at Centennial Park — where unwilling campers were forced to face the elements with inadequate gear, had tents invaded by bears, and experienced a shooting and an overdose death — should never be repeated. We urge you to immediately reject this proposal.

Anchorage Municipal Code of Regulations 25.10.006, which governs camping in municipal parks, clearly states that “[a] person or group of persons shall be allowed a permit for no more than seven consecutive days at any one campsite and for no more than 14 days at any combination of campsites.” There are no exceptions to this provision. Last year, you introduced AO 2022-74 which would have allowed the director of Parks and Recreation to waive this restriction and it failed 3-9. While it might be legal to operate a long-term campground on other municipal lands, it is simply not possible to do so legally on park land.

Last summer's debacle at Centennial Park showed that operating a long-term campground for residents experiencing homelessness in a heavily wooded area away from the city center only leads to tragedy. The people displaced at Centennial Park were ill-equipped for Anchorage's inclement weather, there were no supportive services for them within walking distance, long-term camping in wooded areas

inevitably attracted bears leading to 5 bears being killed, and the lack of proper security put these struggling Alaskans and neighborhood residents in danger. All these problems would happen at Russian Jack Springs or Davis Park just as they did at Centennial Park.

Anchorage's most vulnerable residents deserve better than to be dumped into neighborhood parks, isolated from supportive services, and left without proper security. The Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness has prepared a white paper outlining what would be necessary to safely operate a campground for people experiencing homelessness, and neither Centennial, Russian Jack Springs, nor Davis Park have adequate infrastructure to implement these recommendations.

We hope you will show the people of East Anchorage and Anchorage's homeless and social service communities that you have learned from last year's mistakes, and we urge you to commit to not operating long-term campgrounds for residents experiencing homelessness at Centennial, Russian Jack Springs, or Davis Parks.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Senator Bill Wielechowski  
Senate District K



Senator Löki Gale Tobin  
Senate District I



Senator Forrest Dunbar  
Senate District J



Representative Cliff Groh  
House District 18



Representative Genevieve Mina  
House District 19



Representative Andrew Gray  
House District 20



Representative Stanley Wright  
House District 21



Representative Donna Mears  
House District 22