



Eklutna Valley Community Council

RESOLUTION 2015-01

A RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING THAT THE ALASKA VETERANS FOUNDATION'S PROPOSED VET VILLAGE IN EKLUTNA VALLEY NOT BE FUNDED OR PERMITTED UNTIL IT ADDRESSES THE FOLLOWING CONCERNS

WHEREAS, Many members of Eklutna Valley Community Council are veterans or are married to veterans and as a community we support programs that help veterans readjust to a satisfying and productive civilian life, including the proven Housing First concept; and

WHEREAS, However, we have many substantive concerns with this project, including its residents' representation on the community council, the suitability of the location, its overall feasibility based on the limited information at hand, plans to rezone and to waive subdivision standards or other land-use requirements, the likelihood that the project will cost more than projected, and that the project may be approved and funded before it is proven feasible; and

WHEREAS, We are concerned about **representation on the community council** because Phase I of VetVillageAK would accommodate 30 veterans and several resident staff with plans to house at least 70 more veterans and spouses in the next five years, and if the adjacent 80-acre private parcel is acquired as planned, at least 100 additional veterans and spouses may be housed in Eklutna Valley; and

WHEREAS, In accordance with municipal code chapter 2.40, Eklutna Valley Community Council bylaws allow any person 18 years of age or older whose primary place of abode is within the council's geographical boundaries to be eligible for membership and voting, and the residents of VetVillageAK would represent two to four times the current membership of this community council; and

WHEREAS, The right to vote is inalienable and non-negotiable, despite any attempt to assure us that all of the residents of VetVillageAK will be represented by only one vote on the community council; and

WHEREAS, We have never agreed to be a partner as claimed in the VetVillageAK Project Feasibility Report, Request for Phase I Funding, which leads us to believe that the criteria for becoming a partner are ambiguous and the list of partners may be inflated; and

WHEREAS, we believe **this site may not be appropriate** for the project because:

- One of the project's objectives is that it "must be within the MOA (reasonable proximity of VA facilities and work/learning programs in Anchorage)" but the proposed location is about as far from the various requisite services and amenities located in Eagle River (14 miles or 20 minutes to nearest grocery store) and Anchorage (25 miles or 30 minutes to VA Clinic, 30 miles or 40 minutes to UAA campus, for example) as the project could be and still be in the municipality; and
- The project does not appear to meet several other objectives, particularly that it "must have adequate onsite or municipal water/sewer," "must be able to be rezoned to allow the Village concept (not a traditional subdivision layout)," "must allow sufficient room for no less than two businesses to help make the Village financially self-sufficient within 5 years," "must be within a reasonable distance of the VA Clinic," and "must be within a reasonable distance of Labor Ready, Nine Star, and the University of Alaska Anchorage campus, Goodwill, Salvation Army, Catholic Social Services, etc.;" and
- The portion of Eklutna Lake Road above the AWWU water treatment plant is narrow, winding and dark and is likely to require widening or other improvements to accommodate the increase in industrial traffic associated with VetVillageAK and ensure the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, commuters and park users; and

WHEREAS, We believe the project feasibility report is still a work in progress and **as currently proposed the project may be infeasible** because, for example,

- The project plans to provide two 9-12 passenger vans and make four roundtrips into Anchorage and Eagle River each day, beginning at 8 a.m., which does not seem practical or sufficient to satisfy the employment, shopping, medical, counseling, educational, administrative, civic, religious, and recreational demands of 100 or more residents and live-in staff; and
- The feasibility report has made no provisions for trucks, trailers, or increased traffic required for construction and to supply and distribute the products from the proposed onsite firewood, water bottling plant, and nursery businesses; and
- The map included in the feasibility report should have depicted the existing power line and AWWU utility rights-of-way which run the length of the site and might affect how the site can be developed; and
- The site chosen for the firewood/lumber yard and sawmill is bisected by the power line and AWWU pipeline, as are several of the housing clusters, and houses, septic systems, and a lumberyard may not be built on rights-of-way or utility easements; and
- Locations of a water bottling plant, maintenance office and shop, commercial greenhouse and nursery (including a parking lot), raised gardens (at least 15), septic systems (at least 10, with suitable setbacks), well houses and laundry facilities (at least 7), refuse collection receptacles (with required screening), a garage for passenger vehicles, tractor and "mobile firefighting equipment," and a

corral and stable large enough for “half a dozen horses” are not shown on the map and there doesn’t appear to be enough space to accommodate these facilities; and

- Due to the anticipated high density of houses, it is unlikely that adequate wells and septic systems can be installed to supply every unit while meeting setback requirements; and
- The proposed mix of commercial, industrial and residential uses does not appear to allow for required setbacks or other protections for the VetVillageAK residential areas and requisite setbacks and buffers should be depicted on the map; and
- Underground water sources are spotty in Eklutna Valley and some property owners have been unable to locate water (or sufficient water), so the cost to drill three to four wells to serve Phase I may be much higher than the estimated \$35,000, additional wells for subsequent phases may also prove more costly than anticipated, and it’s possible that the water supply will be inadequate for a subdivision of this size and density; and
- Some of the VetVillageAK components – i.e., the water bottling plant (approx. 5 acres), well houses and laundry facilities, and a much larger area for the lumberyard (approx. 3 acres) – were depicted in a previous draft of the feasibility report which showed the layout for VetVillageAK on an 80-acre site, which leads us to believe that the original concept has been downsized to a 31-acre site while still promising all the original amenities; and

WHEREAS, The Alaska Veterans Foundation is planning to request the site be rezoned but **the zoning districts mentioned in the feasibility report are either unsuitable for the proposed type of development or introduce new variables that are not addressed**, for example:

- Rezoning the firewood/lumber/sawmill area and water bottling plant to CE-I-1 doesn’t meet the purpose of 21.10.040E.4 (Rural Industrial District) because its location is not better suited for industrial rather than residential or commercial development as it is likely to be incompatible with dwellings in the surrounding residential area, and the site map does not account for a 100-foot-wide vegetated buffer between industrial sites and abutting residences; and
- No zoning district has been proposed for anticipated commercial developments, such as the nursery and greenhouse; and
- Although developing the site as a Planned Unit Development (PUD; 21.03.080H), as mentioned in the feasibility report, might address the mix of land uses proposed for this site, assuming they are all deemed compatible, it raises new issues, including the PUD requirement that “a minimum of 30 percent of the site shall be reserved as open space” and one of the standards for the open space is that it not include slopes over 15 percent, which excludes the undeveloped portion of the property uphill from the project area; and
- None of the zoning district choices acknowledges requisite buffers and setbacks, which will significantly reduce the area available for residences and other uses;

for example, the proposed “lumber site” is less than 150 feet wide at its narrowest part, much of which will be needed for buffers along Eklutna Lake Road and adjacent residential areas; and

WHEREAS, The Alaska Veterans Foundation plans to obtain a variance to Title 21 to allow it **to build a “village” that will not conform to subdivision and other municipal building standards**; however, if the project is not a subdivision, it best meets the definition of a “homeless and transient shelter” (21.05.040C.5), which is allowed as a conditional use only in a Public Lands and Institutions (CE-PLI) district; and

WHEREAS, The Alaska Veterans Foundation is requesting \$8 million for Phase I of the VetVillageAK project while the State of Alaska is experiencing severe revenue shortfalls and is planning to cut the capital budget substantially next fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, VetVillageAK is **likely to cost much more than projected** for the reasons listed above and additional unknowns; and

WHEREAS, The Alaska Veterans Foundation is working on rezoning, obtaining various waivers, and other accommodations and anticipates beginning construction this summer, before the feasibility report is adequate to fully understand the scope and feasibility of the project, and **the project may be approved and funded before it is proven feasible**; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Eklutna Valley Community Council does not support this project as presented in the Project Feasibility Report, Request for Phase I Funding dated January 2015; and

2. That the Eklutna Valley Community Council has never agreed to be a partner, and that we be removed from the list of “partners” until such time as we agree to be a partner; and
3. That we do not support the proposed rezoning of the property to accommodate a “village” instead of a planned subdivision; and
4. That the project should be required to satisfy all existing local zoning, subdivision and building code requirements; and
5. That the Alaska Veterans Foundation should be required to address the above concerns and any substantive concerns raised by others before obtaining any more state legislative grants or federal, state, or municipal permits, variances, or waivers; and
6. That if the project is approved, we reserve the right to request a boundary adjustment that would exclude lower Eklutna Valley, including VetVillageAK, from the Eklutna Valley Community Council.

Passed this 25th day of February 2015.



Rick Sinnott, President