



Resurrection Lutheran Church

740 West Tenth Street

Juneau, Alaska 99801

office (907) 586 2380

office email rlcoffice@ak.net

website www.rljuneau.org

October 18, 2023

Sent by email to: Katie.Koester@juneau.gov

Katie Koester
City Manager
155 S. Seward St.
Juneau, AK 99801

Regarding: Immediate Clarification and Reversal Required Regarding CWES

Dear Ms. Koester,

This is urgent, and our community is in desperate need of clarity and swift action regarding the recent developments in the planning and operation of the Cold Weather Emergency Shelter (CWES) for the 2023/24 season. The timeline of events has left us deeply concerned and calling for an immediate explanation and reversal of the decisions made. Had Resurrection Lutheran Church (RLC) received the CWES contract, we would already be open.

In a recent KTOO article, it was stated that your office had been collaborating with St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP) GM Dave Ringle on a backup plan. This plan, as of October 7th, was said to involve Mt. Jumbo Gym. However, the Mt. Jumbo Gym possibility fell through, RLC passed a resolution to operate the CWES, and this decision was promptly communicated to Deputy City Manager Robert Barr in your office.

Nevertheless, an alternative plan to use the previously rejected Thane Warehouse seems to have been revived, even after our commitment. We find it perplexing that this facility is acceptable now, yet unacceptable when an idling bus and the transit center was the last-ditch option. It is crucial that we receive a clear, time-sensitive explanation for this change in facility selection. We need to understand why this new plan was only formulated after extensive consultation and lobbying on RLC's part.

Notably, it appears that nearly all details described by Dave Ringle in the KTOO article have been driven by our model, which was based on extensive experience, research, Planning Commission approvals, and discussions with the community. Through vague insinuations it has been suggested that Mr. Ringle would operate the shelter differently, but details or specific situations have not been offered. The safety and well-being of our patrons has always been our top priority. Your office mentioned community and congregation concerns, but we must emphasize that these were heard mainly due to our efforts to facilitate numerous opportunities for community input in various forums.

We are quite troubled by the fact that this new plan involves a facility in a remote, unpopulated, non-residential area. This creates a significant barrier for CWES patrons who may not be able to access other necessary resources. While shuttles/busses to and from the CWES might provide some help, they will be of greatest utility to those who are already receiving services through existing programs. These are often not the people most in need of the "emergency" nature of the CWES emphasized in yesterday's Juneau Empire article. In fact, the paucity of basic

services and limited accessibility are completely contrary to national low-barrier shelter best-practices. Together with the fact that the facility is a warehouse, the location and plans communicate to CWES patrons how other Juneau citizens feel about them. This correlates to poor outcomes and lengthier periods of homelessness.

Quotes from your office suggest that locating the shelter away from a populated, residential area is responsive to public safety concerns. We provide extensive training and use multiple safety tools to minimize risk. Despite the common belief, shelters do not pose a threat to schools, children, residents or businesses. We are deeply concerned that anyone from your office, as a city representative, has endorsed these unfounded fears.

The lack of community input on the Thane Warehouse is unacceptable. This has left us in the dark about potential concerns from nearby businesses, agencies, and the broader community. Last season, we worked diligently with related agencies to ensure the safety and well-being of our patrons, often connecting with CARES several times a night and working with Glory Hall, AWARE and Bartlett Hospital staff several times a week. All stakeholders must have input before the CBJ awards a contract that is being improvised, at a new location with a new provider, for nearly \$250,000.

How is your office allowed to choose an untried, unready, and unauthorized facility, working with an organization that previously ended its contract early over a site that is proven, permitted, and could have been open by now, managed by the organization that worked with everyone to pick up the contract when no one else could? This decision was made outside of the bidding or purchasing norms, during a transition between City Managers and while waiting for the votes to be counted and newly elected Assembly members to be sworn in. What protocols were followed? What standards were used?

After the congregation's first tie vote resulted in RLC not submitting a CWES bid, the CBJ approached us to discuss reasons and options. The congregation then voted against the second proposal we brought. If the decision to opt for a different provider and location was probable, it should have been communicated to Resurrection before we explored a third vote, thus sparing us from the turmoil and heartache of the most recent meeting. We were allowed to believe that Resurrection was the only alternative to the bus/transit center plan until Saturday, October 7th. Even then, we were told only that your office was exploring the Mt. Jumbo Gym site with SVdP. The mention of a "super narrow vote" on October 8th is concerning, as it would have been inappropriate to let this inform the last-minute consideration of another site.

We learned by mid-September that Mr. Ringle was looking for an alternative to the city using an idling bus/transit center, but acknowledged that he was unable find any other sites. We let him know that we were bringing the CWES back to the RLC congregation for a third vote and were hopeful. He indicated his willingness to work with us to help patrons find other housing placements. However, by the following week, Mr. Ringle told us that he had been contacted by a former colleague, and member of our congregation who was not in support of RLC hosting the CWES again, and urging him to propose that SVdP manage the CWES at the RLC facility. SVdP never followed-up with a formal proposal or details that we could bring to our council or congregation.

Actions of the City Manager Office have raised questions about the impartiality of the decision-making regarding the CWES. Robert Barr claimed to want to stay out of church politics but has seemingly taken a side in this matter. This decision not only undermines the congregation but also places an unnecessary burden on the patrons we serve. We also find it disturbing that, having made this departure from experience, the shelter will be opening before the variance can even be proposed. There is no valid reason for the timing of this alternative plan, and it appears to be influenced by factors beyond the well-being of those in need and the community at large. Something seems is very wrong here.

In summary, the timeline of events is deeply troubling, and we cannot afford further delays. We are imploring your office to reevaluate this choice. Hundreds of people have already signed petitions we can bring to the Assembly meeting on Monday. It is imperative that we receive an explanation for this lack of transparency, and

an immediate reversal of the decision. The integrity of Resurrection Lutheran Church matters–, and the welfare of our patrons is at stake.

This is urgent, and we require a prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Perkins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rev. Karen Perkins, Pastor

[Resurrection Lutheran Church](#)

740 W 10th Street, Juneau, AK 99801

808 782 6653 direct | rlcpastor@ak.net

cc: CBJ Mayor and Assembly
CBJ Manager's Office
CBJ Planning Commission
Robert Palmer, CBJ City Attorney
Shelly Klawonn, Senior Buyer, CBJ Purchasing Division
RLC Partner Agencies
RLC Warming Shelter Supporters

Visit: warmingshelter.org