

Introduced by: Lee Foley, City Manager
Date: March 11, 2014
Action: Passed
Vote: 6-1

CITY OF BETHEL, ALASKA

Resolution # 14-05

A RESOLUTION BY THE BETHEL CITY COUNCIL OPPOSING THE BETHEL YARD DOCK PROJECT PERMIT APPLICATION AS PRESENTED TO THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS ALASKA DISTRICT

WHEREAS, Knik Construction Co., Inc. filed a permit application with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Alaska District to request approval of a dock construction project (reference number POA-2014-64) called "Bethel Yard Dock;"

Whereas, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers disseminated information on the project through a *Public Notice of Application for Permit* dated February 19, 2014 and is requesting comments;

WHEREAS, the proposed work is to construct an open-cell steel sheetpile bulkhead approximately 1,150 linear feet long that would occupy approximately 850 linear feet of the Kuskokwim River shoreline;

WHEREAS, the proposed dock would project out from the west bank and into the Kuskokwim River approximately 100 linear feet and take up another 50-100 linear feet when a barge and tug are tied up along the dock—effectively choking off the river for use by other barges, tugs, and large vessels, especially the deepest part of the river;

WHEREAS, the "choke point" is magnified by the fact that the east bank of the Kuskokwim River, located opposite the proposed dock, is shallow and will increasingly become shallower due to the natural flow of the river;

WHEREAS, pilot boats guiding ocean-going barges and smaller river barges will face difficulty navigating the Kuskokwim River between the Bethel Yard Dock that juts 100 feet out from the shoreline and an ocean-going barge 100 feet wide tied up alongside it;

WHEREAS, the potential danger with the proposed project is illustrated by the City's Petro Dock experience, in which several pilot boats and barges coming downriver and carried east by the current have nearly collided with the City's Petro Dock, and it only extends into the river 50 feet;

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WHEREAS a bulkhead constriction in the Kuskokwim River during the busy summer-only barge season is likely to cause barges to have to stay upriver or downriver of the choke point and wait for appropriate high tide water or for moored barges on the yard dock to leave before they can safely navigate past the Bethel Yard Dock;

WHEREAS, barge delays will result in higher transportation costs and therefore higher product and petroleum product costs for residents of the YK Delta region;

WHEREAS, the proposed bulkhead promises to make night-time marine navigation especially treacherous, especially when compounded with naturally occurring environmental conditions affecting visibility, like cloud cover, fog, rain and snow;

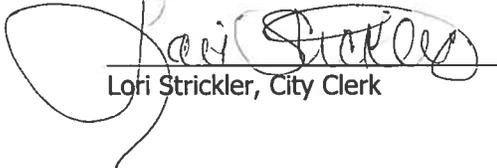
WHEREAS, the City of Bethel believes that the proposed construction may adversely affect the natural river channel and negatively impact the City's seawall, Petro Port, City Dock, or opposite bank through severe scouring or shoaling, and urges that a hydrology study coupled with a navigation study be conducted;

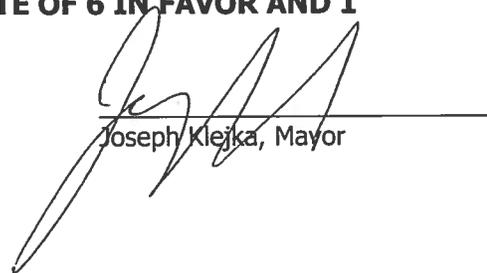
WHEREAS, the City has anecdotal evidence that a dock and moored barge jutting into the river 200 feet is too far: when Knik parked its 200-foot barge nose to shore over the years to load and off-load, local boaters would often complain to the City and say, "the barge is blocking the river," and the complaints were more emphatic when darkness was involved;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City of Bethel is opposed to the Bethel Yard Dock as designed and presented in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Notice of Application for State Water Quality Certification dated February 19, 2014 and is hopeful that the project can be redesigned to accommodate the concerns expressed herein.

ENACTED THIS 11th DAY OF MARCH 2014 BY A VOTE OF 6 IN FAVOR AND 1 OPPOSED.

ATTEST:


Lori Strickler, City Clerk


Joseph Klejka, Mayor