March 3, 2006

Dear Mr. Emerson,

The State of Alaska allows school districts to build schools if there are ten students in a community, but does not require them to do so. If the Borough annexes Funter Bay, the Juneau School District would provide education to students residing in the area. The district would decide on the educational program provided and on transportation.

The program provided could be through correspondence for a single child or for more than ten students. When there were ten students in the community, the Board of Education could decide that the best way to deliver education to students was a school and then apply to the state for funding for building a school. If the Board were to do this and the state approved the school, the Board would ask the Assembly to pass an ordinance to allow the voters of Juneau to vote on building the school. This would be the process under the current process for school bonds. The legislature could change the process, as they did with Proposition C a few years ago, but unless they change the whole program the initial decision on recommending a school lies with the school board and the ultimate decision is made by the voters.

The district is not required to provide transportation to regular education students from their home to school. The district currently only provides transportation to students by bus. Any change to the transportation program is a change the Board could consider.

Shelter Island is already within the Borough. Students on Shelter Island have participated in the district's correspondence program in the past and could do so now. The district does not provide transportation to Shelter Island. If the student's family provided transportation to the student to Tee Harbor or Amalga Harbor, the district would transport that student by bus to the local schools. The decision on building a school would need to be recommended by the Board and decided by the voters.

For communities with ten or more students, Board could decide that a school was the best way to provide an educational program or that a correspondence program best serves the students. With the new federal requirements of teachers being highly qualified, small schools are challenging to staff, so the Board could decide that continuing correspondence study was the best delivery method.

Peggy Cowan, Superintendent
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On Feb 14, 2006, at 4:15 AM, <funterbay@starband.net> <funterbay@starband.net> wrote:

Dear Ms. Cowan,

Hopefully you received my last email answering your questions about children at Funter Bay? I did have another question. The State of Alaska supplies schools and teachers when there are I believe 7 or 8 children in a community. If there were 8 children at Funter would the Juneau Borough have to supply a school. Likewise, if there were 8 on Shelter Island would transportation be provided or another school built?

Thank you again for your time,
Phil Emerson

Thanks for contacting me, our current transportation regulations do not contemplate serving those not connected by road. The current regulations would need to be reviewed in light of an annexation. We could contemplate applying some of the same kind for criteria we currently use for buses in terms of distance, time in transit and number of students. We do not provide bus service to all students in Juneau, some live too close to a school and others live too far from other students. Some students currently residing in the Borough receive their education through our correspondence or Homebridge program, which we also could consider. How many students live in Funter Bay? How far is it from Juneau? What is the closest mainland landing? How are they currently receiving education?

Peggy Cowan, Superintendent
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