

**Mayor Mark Begich remarks**  
**Girdwood 2020 Annual Meeting**  
**8:30 p.m. (speaking time) Feb. 14, 2003; Alyeska Prince Hotel**

**Thanks - Ken Flynn.**

**Thanks - Girdwood 2020 board.**

**Pleased to be part of your celebration, especially when it looks like differences are being put aside.**

**As many know, was just here Wednesday night. Joined about 250 people – great meeting - positive, constructive.**

**Message I got: this growing community of enormous potential is ready to move ahead.**

**Broad consensus in Girdwood: has been enough planning. Let's move on.**

**Population is growing: 37 percent in 10 years (from about 1,350 in 1993 to about 1,850 now).**

**Is enormous potential for year-round recreation.**

**Tonight, wanted to update you on developments in Girdwood and talk about my vision for the community.**

**Of course, most of the focus is on the enormous potential of Winner Creek.**

**As we drove in Wednesday afternoon for the meeting, the sun was shining on the Winner Creek area, as the existing ski mountain was in the shade. Dramatically showed me the potential.**

**As you know, this area is five times the size of the existing Alyeska resort. Considered the best undeveloped ski terrain in North America.**

**Much of it is beginner and intermediate scale, attractive to marginal skiing families like mine. Some of it is on a glacier, so potential for year-round skiing.**

**Preliminary estimates show the area could attract thousands more skiers per winter, with another 320,000 visitors in the summer.**

**Would generate \$74 million a year in gross revenues and create up to new 900 jobs.**

**Fortunately, most of the land is either in municipal or state hands, ready for development.**

**My sense from Wednesday night is that most residents and property owners are ready to proceed.**

**We are working closely with project sponsors and Senator Stevens – who has a warm spot in his heart for Girdwood.**

**Thanks to this group for the leadership in moving this opportunity along. The two summit conferences you held last fall were extremely valuable and led to the drafting of the Memorandum of Understanding we are now circulating for signatures.**

**We're working hard with all parties to produce an RFP that will meet the needs of this community and industry.**

**I think we can have a world-class ski resort and preserve the small town character of Girdwood. I also think we can protect our trails, open space and natural areas by incorporating them INTO development plans.**

**As same time, we're working to prepare the community for inevitable growth.**

**I have good news to report on the new post office for Girdwood. Thanks to a cooperative effort between the Heritage Land Bank and the US Postal Service, we are asking the Assembly to approve the sale of a key HLB parcel in the Girdwood Town Site for construction of the new post office.**

**Postal Service has agreed to design and construct a building suitable for a mountain resort town. Senator Stevens will have an officer there, too.**

**We thank Sen. Stevens for his efforts, since this is virtually the only new post office to be constructed since 9/11.**

**While we're talking about HLB, want to mention George Cannelos, the HLB director, is leaving my administration for an unexpected opportunity in the private sector.**

**He has ably represented the public's interests in our lands, and worked very closely with you on Glacier-Winner Creek and the golf course.**

**Thanks to George for his service, and to assure you that we are actively recruiting to fill his position so that we don't have a delay in our fast-moving agenda.**

**As your community grows, so do your needs for infrastructure. Our Water and Wastewater Utility is very busy down here planning and implementing projects.**

**The Water Master Plan is still open for public comment.**

**Final testing is being done on the water line to the school. We are happy to report that tap should be turned on in the next 45 days.**

**The water line to the fire station should be in by this time next year; if not sooner.**

**And as we move forward on the Heritage Land Bank land use study, we'll choose the best route for bringing a water line across the east side of the Valley, so the west side is served by two major water mains.**

**I know affordable housing is a major issue for you and as we study the Heritage Land Bank's portfolio, we will look at ways the city can help with housing efforts.**

**As we develop a year-round resort, I believe a golf course is an essential part. Now that the Supreme Court has determined the initiative process was invalid, we are strategizing with the developers to see how best we can move forward.**

**Another theme we heard Wednesday night is that Girdwoodians are an autonomous lot who, more often than not, like to choose their own destiny.**

**To that end, and through the hard work of Assembly members Janice Shamberg and Dick Tremain, the Assembly Tuesday night will likely approve an ordinance for the April ballot that will allow residents of the Girdwood service area to impose their own mill rate cap.**

**By doing that, you can avoid the citywide municipal tax cap and decide how much you want to assess yourselves for the services you want in your community.**

**I know when it comes to controlling street maintenance and parks programs, this will be huge for you locally. I commend you for working together to get to a place where you will be able to make that decision.**

**The Girdwood Area Plan was the result of many meetings and hearings and 100's of hours of volunteer time. The issues identified then are still the issues today:**

- Community growth**
- Resort & Residential development**
- And retention of open space**

**As others have noted, the plan set out an ambitious implementation schedule which has not been met.**

**But the wheels are now turning - we will make progress.**

**We don't want to plan your community for you, we want to help you plan it, open up lines of communication and avoid bureaucratic delays whenever possible.**

**I keep referring to Wednesday night, but we heard so many interesting, thoughtful comments, I want to relay them.**

**One speaker mentioned how we are now looking back on the last 10 years, wondering why so little has been done when the plans have been there all along.**

**In another 10 years, let's look back on where we are today and be able to say, look at how our planning and communication paid off. Look at the progress we've made.**

**As visitors fly in from around the world to ski the trails of Glacier Winner Creek, and as summer visitors swing golf clubs – they will marvel at the open space that's been preserved.**

**I hope we can look proudly at what was produced after we stopped bickering and started talking. We won't be Aspen or Park City.**

**But still Girdwood, Alaska – a world-class, four-season resort, with a small town flavor and respect for nature and open space you can't find anywhere else.**

**Thank you again for this opportunity. I look forward to working with you on moving your community forward.**