

POSSIBLE MOTION

I move to approve Resolution 2010-05 authorizing the Municipal Administrator to submit application to obtain existing replica of a Russian Blockhouse and its .063 acres of land and to accept ownership of this property if application is approved.

Note: This has been reviewed by the Sitka Historic Preservation Commission and they support it.

CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

RESOLUTION NO. 2010-05

**A RESOLUTION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA,
AUTHORIZING THE MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATOR TO OBTAIN, OPERATE AND
MAINTAIN THE EXISTING REPLICA OF A RUSSIAN BLOCKHOUSE**

WHEREAS, the Sitka Blockhouse C is a modern replica of an old Russian fortification on the site described as USS 1473 US Reserve for Public Purposes containing .063 acres, with the Blockhouse denoted as USR Land Monument #1; and

WHEREAS, the original blockhouse on the site burned, was reconstructed in 1960-61, and was maintained under a MOU first issued July 28, 1970 between Bureau of Land Management (BLM), State of Alaska, National Park Service, Sitka Tribe of Alaska, St. Michael's Orthodox Church, City and Borough of Sitka (CBS), and Sitka Historical Society, with management authority passed back and forth over the years; and

WHEREAS, BLM wishes to transfer its ownership of Russian Blockhouse C to an appropriate municipal or non-profit organization to continue the long-term historical and recreational use of this property, and except for CBS, no local agencies or organizations are willing to take on future managerial responsibility for the site; and

WHEREAS, the City and Borough of Sitka is capable of taking over ownership and maintenance of the Blockhouse and .063 acres which constitute public lands and must be conveyed for recreational and public purposes and has received an Access Easement for the Russian Blockhouse and trail leading to it from the Orthodox Church; and

WHEREAS, BLM has completed upgrades of the Russian Blockhouse including reproofing and other improvements;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska:

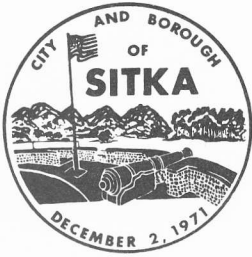
1. That the Assembly hereby authorizes the Municipal Administrator to submit an application to the Bureau of Land Management for transfer of ownership of the replica of the Russian Blockhouse C to City and Borough of Sitka.
2. That the Assembly states the Municipal Administrator is established as the agent for the City and Borough of Sitka for administration of this transfer of ownership.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska, on this 27th day of April, 2010.

Scott McAdams, Mayor

ATTEST:

Colleen Ingman, MMC, Municipal Clerk



City and Borough of Sitka

100 Lincoln Street • Sitka, Alaska 99835

February 3, 2010

MEMO TO: Administrator Jim Dinley
Mayor and Assembly

FROM: Marlene Campbell, Government Relations Director

SUBJECT: Status of Sitka Blockhouse Transfer to CBS

Administrator Dinley has worked with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) officials as well as Orthodox Church officials for many months to complete the process for BLM to upgrade the replica of a Russian Blockhouse to acceptable condition in order for the City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) to accept ownership of it. As you know, since the 1970's there have been MOU's between BLM and various entities to manage and maintain Blockhouse C, but the building has deteriorated and no entity would accept long-term ownership.

BLM has now completed various interpretive signs, upgraded the Blockhouse itself, and most recently completely re-roofed it. It is now in good condition and CBS can accept ownership. Administrator Dinley also worked with St. Michael's Orthodox Church and the national Orthodox Church to gain an Access Easement from the Church for the trail leading to the Blockhouse. This easement is also completed.

The last step in the process is to submit the BLM Application For Land For Recreation or Public Purposes. The application is completed, but a resolution must be included that provides authorization for the City's agent to submit the application and also accept the ownership of the facility. This resolution 2010-05 is attached for your consideration.

If there are any questions, please contact me (phone 747-1855 or e-mail campbell@cityofsitka.com).

Sitka Blockhouse Administrative History

The Sitka Blockhouse is a replica of a Russian Blockhouse originally sited nearby as part of a defensive stockade built around Sitka in the early 1800's. The blockhouse sits upon 0.063 acres of land close to the center of the town (T.55 S., R63 E., section 36 CRM USS 1474 Tract A.) It is an isolated parcel with the main access across the Orthodox Church's historic cemetery. Informal access to the site is up a steep dirt path that used to be part of U.S Public School Reserve # 2 (S-1473). This land is owned by the State and encompasses the Pioneer Home.

A five year MOU was signed in July 1998 by the Anchorage Field Office (AFO), Sitka Tribe of Alaska, St. Michael's Orthodox Church, the City and Borough of Sitka and the Sitka Historical Society. The MOU authorized these community groups to manage, maintain, and protect the site. A subsequent MOU was started approximately five years later in 2003 by AFO but several concerns complicating the MOU were raised by some of the partners. The second MOU was never completed.

Prior to the 1998 MOU the U.S. Park Service requested and received a Special Use permit from the BLM (March 28, 1960) to construct a replica Blockhouse on the parcel. The replica (and current structure) was completed in July, 1962, and is now 45 years old and in need of repair. (See Building Condition and Safety Assessment, 9/2004)

The State of Alaska expressed interest in the blockhouse site as a Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) historic site as early as 1960 when the plans for re-construction were still being discussed. In September, 1962 the NPS decided that they could not transfer the property to the State until the NPS transferred ownership of the Blockhouse to BLM. BLM also decided that they could not transfer the land to the State without an Act of Congress and recommended a 20 year lease instead.

In December, 1964 BLM issued a 20 year R&PP lease to the State and in January the NPS Special land-use permit was cancelled. In February, 1970 the State relinquished its lease and decided it was not interested in permanent ownership of the land.

In July 1970 an MOU between BLM and NPS transferring management responsibility for the Blockhouse site to the NPS was signed. Again in 1976 the NPS offered the blockhouse site to the State and the State agreed. In November, 1978 the State applied to BLM for a 25 year R&PP lease. In June of that year the NPS asked BLM to relinquish the MOU but the paperwork was not processed in time for the State's application. In June, 1981 the State decided it was unable to manage the Blockhouse site and declined to proceed. In June, 1984 BLM notified NPS that the 1970 MOU was still in effect.

The .063 acres of land upon which the Sitka Blockhouse rests was originally set aside (withdrawn/reserved) for general public purposes in 1890 and is currently owned and managed by the BLM AFO.