



CITY OF BETHEL

P.O. Box 1388 Bethel, Alaska 99559
907-543-2047
FAX # 543-4171

Memorandum

Date: April 6, 2005
To: Alaska Rural Justice and Law Enforcement Commission
From: Hugh Dymont, Mayor, City of Bethel *H. D.*
Re: Regional Public Safety Bldg.

One of the Alaska Rural Justice and Law Enforcement Commission's tasks is to make recommendations that maximize the efficient uses of federal, state, local and tribal resources. I am here to speak to how a public safety building and training center that served the entire Yukon-Kuskokwim region would do that.

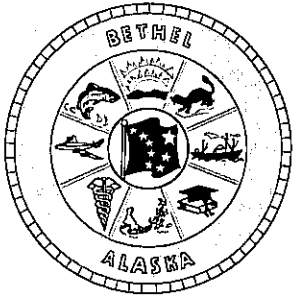
Over the years, dozens of reports have addressed the need for increased training for our rural law enforcement officers, whether they be municipal police officers, state troopers or village public safety officers (VPSOs). Frankly, one impediment to this is the cost of offering training in Sitka. We believe that a public safety building in Bethel that housed the state troopers, our municipal police, the state District Attorney and public defender offices could also be used as a training facility for VPSOs and tribal police officers.

Bethel is a hub community for 56 villages. Our cost of living is three to four times what is experienced in communities on the road system. A regional public safety building would benefit from the economies of scale and save real dollars to the state of Alaska, the City of Bethel and the federal government. This would free up money for training, restorative justice programs, and the cost of putting more officers on the street and VPSOs in the village.

There have been dozens of reports over the years that determined the need for increased training for the state's village public safety officers. Currently, potential VPSOs need to wait up to a year to be selected to attend training in Sitka. A regional training facility in western Alaska would allow for more frequent, less expensive and culturally empathetic training. For instance, every village law enforcement officer I have ever known does his business in Yup'ik. Bethel has Yup'ik speaking municipal police officers. I envision the city working with the state to loan our officers to the state during training sessions.

Hugh Dymont

"Deep Sea and Transportation Center of the Kuskokwim" City of Bethel - Mayor



CITY OF BETHEL

P.O. Box 1388 Bethel, Alaska 99559

907-543-2047

FAX # 543-4171

I deeply appreciate the Commission's entry into what are very murky legal waters regarding tribal authority vs. state or municipal authority. However, this does not have to be a zero sum game. For instance, I know that the issue of cross-deputization is something at which the commission is looking. Village municipal governments are closing their doors and giving way to traditional councils with access to federal Bureau of Indian Affairs funding streams. But, in my experience, tribal police officers who work for traditional councils, are outside of the VPSO system and have little to no training. A regional public safety building with the capacity for regional training would go a long way towards solving this problem cost effectively.

Hugh Dymont

"Deep-Sea and Transportation Center of the Kuskokwim" City of Bethel - Mayor