

EagleExit: The “Cityhood Movement” Moves North

Description

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Several communities in the **Georgia County of Fulton** have decided they want their local government closer to the people. **Fulton County** and **Cobb County** include the **City of Atlanta**. These communities have formally detached from Fulton in what has been dubbed a *Cityhood Movement*.^[1] As some Alaskans who live in the area of the **Municipality of Anchorage** consider the possibility of doing the same—in what is known as **Assembly District 2 (AD2)**—the lessons of communities which have done this elsewhere are worth considering.

The **EagleExit** organization has been working two years to prepare a plan for the **Local Boundary Commission (LBC)**.

Under Article X Section 12 of the **Alaska Constitution** the commission may present any proposed local government boundary changes to the **Alaska Legislature** during the first 10 days of any regular session. The change shall become effective 45 days after presentation or at the end of the session, whichever is earlier, unless disapproved by a resolution concurred in by a majority of the members of each house.[2]

Alaska currently has 19 organized boroughs and the Unorganized Borough according to the Department of Community and Regional Affairs Website. The **Municipality of Anchorage** is a borough.

<https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/dcra/LocalBoundaryCommission.aspx>

The LBC has five members appointed by the Governor; one appointed from each of Alaska's four judicial districts. The Chair is appointed at large. Currently the At-Large Chairman appointed by **Gov. Mike Dunleavy** is **Larry Wood** of Eagle River. **John Harrington** was appointed from the First Judicial District, Ketchikan, by **Gov. Sean Parnell**. The Second Judicial District is represented by **Kenneth Gallahorn** from Kotzebue, appointed by Gov. Dunleavy. **Richard "Clayton" Trotter** was appointed by Gov. Dunleavy to represent the Third Judicial District, and he lives in Eagle River. The fifth member of the LBC is **Lance Roberts** of Fairbanks, appointed by Gov. Dunleavy to represent Alaska's Fourth Judicial District.

This is the group that must be convinced that detaching AD2 from the **Municipality of Anchorage** is legal and has merit.



Alaska Boroughs

The *Alaska Municipal League* provides a **Short History of Borough Formation since Statehood**:

- Through bipartisan legislative mandate, the “Mandatory Borough Act” of 1963, nine regional areas were forced, in a relatively short period of time, to establish themselves as boroughs. These were: Ketchikan, Sitka, Juneau, Haines, Kenai, Anchorage, Kodiak, Mat-Su, and Fairbanks.
- Over the course of 57 years (1962-2019), ten boroughs formed voluntarily. These are: Bristol Bay, North Slope, Northwest Arctic, Aleutians East, Lake and Peninsula, Denali, Yakutat, Skagway, Wrangell and Petersburg.
- Incentives provided by the legislature to incorporate have included: shared taxes, revenue sharing funding, “seed money” funding, and municipal land entitlements.

Today’s **Unorganized Borough** is described as follows:

- The singular Unorganized Borough of Alaska, encompasses over half of the area of the state, over 374,000 square miles. About 82,000 people reside within the borough, which is 13 percent of Alaskans.
- Within the Unorganized Borough, there are 15 Home Rule and First Class Cities (such as Unalaska, Nome, Valdez, Cordova, Hoonah, Nenana, Tanana) and 80 Second Class Cities (such as Delta Junction, Gustavus, Whittier, Fort Yukon).
- Reports from Department of Community and Regional Affairs and LBC over the years have recommended different levels of borough formation out of the unorganized, such as model “starter” boroughs or fully conceived boroughs, which meet standards of incorporation.

The inequity of having an unorganized borough over more than half of the state is easiest to see in the Public Education System and Funding:

- The nineteen *organized boroughs* of Alaska encompass nineteen school districts, each with an elected school board and a superintendent. Each borough contributes a **Required Local Contribution** (currently 2.65 mils of FVD) to basic educational need; funding of which the state is not required to provide.

With State budget cuts in recent years, local governments can no longer expect State assistance in paying for capital expenses as has happened in the past.

- The single *Unorganized Borough* encompasses 15 municipal school districts (Home Rule or First Class cities with education powers), and 19 **Rural Education Attendance Areas**, for a total of 34 school districts. Each district has its own school board and superintendent. **While municipal districts are required to fund a local contribution, the 19 REAA s are completely state funded, both operations and maintenance.**
- This inequity is an ongoing source of friction, even litigation.[3]



A 1981 study concluded “the present system encourages dependence and that the inhabitants of the Unorganized Borough are encouraged to be supplicants and clients of state-provided services and largely spectators upon the political life of local government”. (Thomas, ed., Ritchie, page 644)

Sandy Springs First Declared Independence in Georgia

Oliver W. Porter played a key role in the implementation of the new *City of Sandy Springs*, and wrote a book about it.[4] I have met Porter in Atlanta myself, and he has been an advisor to **EagLExit**.



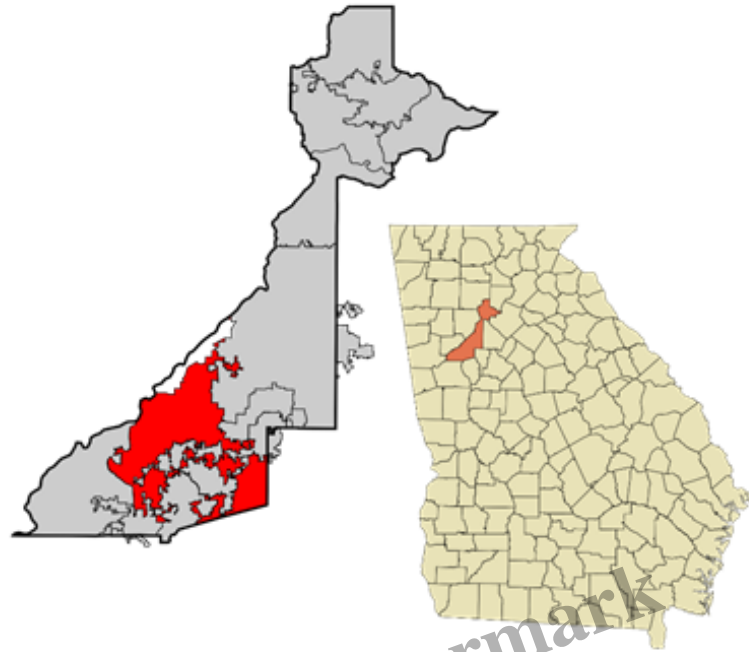
Implementation of *Sandy Springs* was unique in a number of ways. Unlike Alaska, with provisions in our constitution to allow boundary changes, it was necessary to create new laws to enable incorporation there. The first step had to be forming a local boundary commission in Georgia! The process of creating a new local government entity took one year and it was done by the organizers without authority, funds or staff. Created by volunteers in a major exercise of democracy, services of the city were assigned to private industry in the broadest such contract in the nation.

These are not Collective Bargaining Agreements with the city and public sector unions. These are contracts for services with vendors responsible for delivering direct services. If the vendors choose to affiliate with private sector unions that is their choice. Results are what matters for the citizens of Sandy Springs.

From the book: “The innovative use of private industry, through competitive contracting, to provide the widest possible scope of community services could well become a model for the twenty-first century city in America.”

Since the successful detachment of Sandy Springs from the City of Atlanta in 2005, other communities have been able to do the same.

From Wikipedia: *South Fulton is a city in Fulton County, Georgia, United States, in the Atlanta metropolitan area. It was incorporated in 2017 from parts of southwest Fulton County and includes the communities of Ben Hill, Sandtown, Cliftondale, Peters Woods, and an area of 85.64 square miles (22,155 acres).*



This process was not easy. In 2007 the people of the region voted in a referendum 85% **against** forming a municipality. In 2016 the Georgia General Assembly passed bill HB514 to incorporate South Fulton, which received the signature of Governor **Nathan Deal** on April 29, 2016.

On November 8, 59% of the citizens of South Fulton voted to become a chartered city. In early 2017, South Fulton held elections on March 21, followed by runoff elections before incorporation took effect May 1.

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One year start to finish.

Today South Fulton's population as of 2019 is estimated to be 99,155 making it the fifth largest city in Georgia. In 2010, prior to incorporation, the United States Census Bureau estimates that the area now within South Fulton's boundaries was home to 85,769 people.

We don't have enough organized boroughs in Alaska to bring government to the people. Instead, we have some boroughs that were required to be formed but serve only high population areas. ~~Article X of our State Constitution calls for ...maximum local self-government with a minimum of local government units...as it should be.~~ Requiring Alaskans who choose to organize local governments to pay for services to areas of the state which choose not to organize is enabling behavior, resulting in weak public education and

On the other hand, Alaskans should not be bound to a borough simply because it is the original governing entity. A community that wants to detach should be encouraged to go on its own, as a child leaves the family home should be encouraged to embrace the future.

The time has come for EaglExit.

References:

South Fulton is the latest of a number of Atlanta, GA communities to detach

[1] https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Fulton,_Georgia

[2] Alaska's Constitution; a Citizen's Guide, Gordon Harrison fourth edition, Alaska Legislative Affairs Agency, 2002

[3] Creating the New City of Sandy Springs, Oliver W. Porter, Authorhouse Publishers, Bloomington, IN, 2006.

[4] Alaska Municipal League

<https://www.akml.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Unorganized-Borough-Walker.pdf>

Other stories about the effort to detach AD2 from the Municipality of Anchorage:

Veteran-Owned Business

<https://donnliston.net/2021/05/veteran-owned-business.html>

EaglExit Challenges

<https://donnliston.net/2021/05/eaglexit-challenges.html>

The Important Role of Local Government

<https://donnliston.net/2021/05/eaglexit-challenges.html>

What kind of future do we want?

<https://donnliston.net/2021/04/a-vision-for-chugiak-eagle-river-2021.html>

Our Public Education Challenge

<https://donnliston.net/2021/03/our-asd-public-education-challenge.html>

Matanuska Brewing Company Innovates

https://donnliston.net/2021/03/challenges-from-anchorage_20.html

Looking Back, And A Vision for the Future

<https://donnliston.net/2021/02/the-big-picture-of-eaglexit.html>

What Happened to Anchorage Hospitality?

<https://donnliston.net/2021/02/the-best-thing-about-being-in-anchorage.html>

The Cozy Side of Eagle River

<https://donnliston.net/2021/01/destiny-happens.html>

Pandemic Business Survivor ER Small Engine Repair

<https://donnliston.net/2020/11/the-wonder-of-small-engines-john.html>

Decentralize Anchorage. It Really is Our Only Solution

<https://donnliston.net/2020/08/decentralize-anchorage-it-really-is-our.html>

How Can Alaska Gain Food Security?

<https://donnliston.net/2020/06/how-can-alaska-gain-food-security.html>

Eaglexit's New Validation

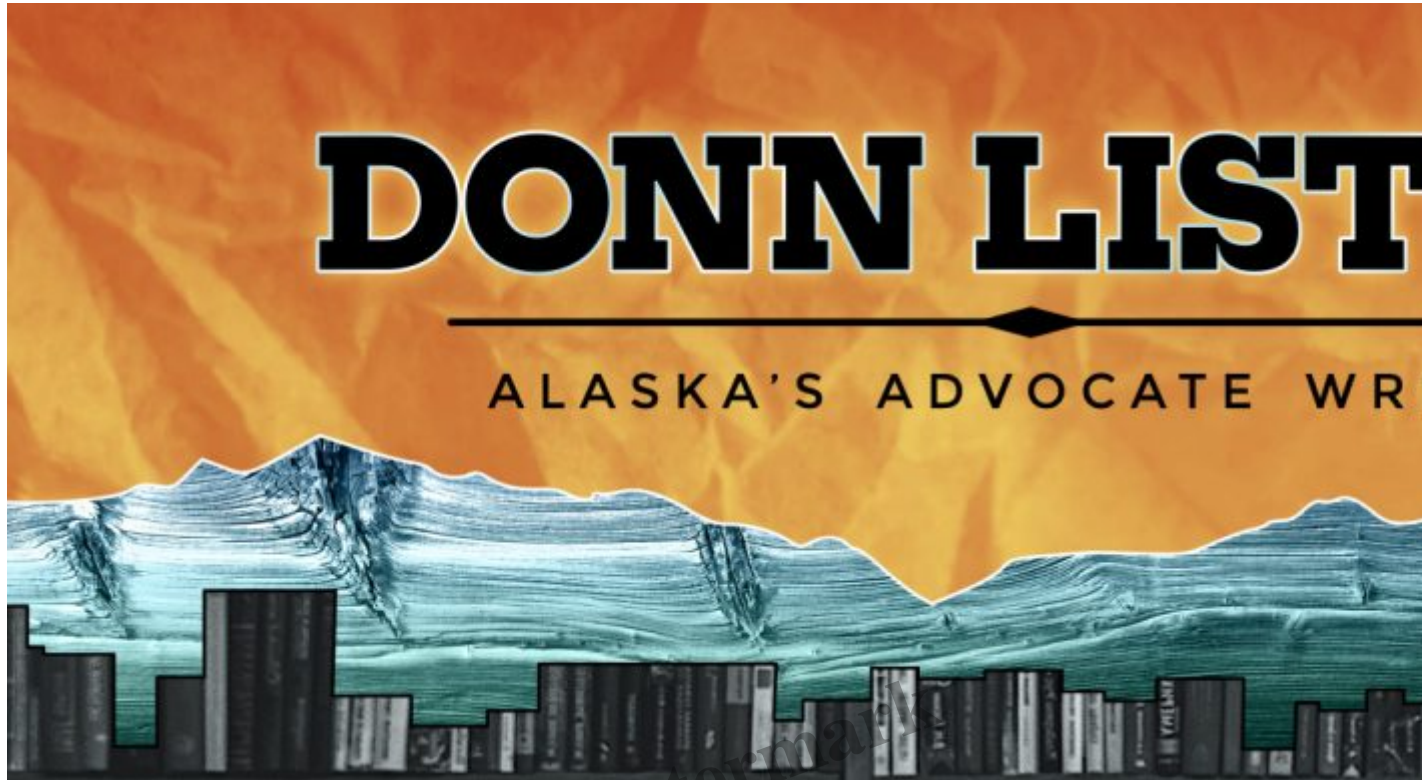
<https://donnliston.net/2020/05/eaglexits-new-validation.html>

Eaglexit Overview

<https://donnliston.net/2019/09/eaglexitoverview-what-is-eaglexit-all.html>

Is Eagle River ready for a Divorce?

<https://donnliston.net/2019/05/is-eagle-river-ready-for-divorce.html>



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