

January 17, 2024

Dear Lake and Peninsula School District School Board,

We write to you today to request the fulfillment of a great need of additional housing at the Newhalen School. Currently, LPSD houses five full time teachers on site. The additional certified staff, five teachers and one principal, live off campus. Many teachers who live off campus are, or will be in the next couple of years, eligible for retirement. When they do retire, we will be scrambling to find additional rentable housing anywhere in Iliamna or Newhalen.

We have six total housing units at Newhalen School- five of which are occupied year-round. The sixth is utilized as itinerant housing/tutor housing/student teacher apartment. Due to a lack of housing, we are unable to provide more than one student teacher or tutor to our site at a time. With 88-105 kids throughout the school year at various stages of their learning career, more staff are essential to help children stay or get back on track with their learning progress.

Across Alaska, there is a major housing crisis. According to a recent study by Agnew::Beck Consulting, to meet demand, Alaska needs an estimated 27,500 new housing units over the next ten years. In 2022, construction of only 578 new housing units was authorized statewide. At that rate, it will take nearly 50 years to hit the ten-year target.

In 2022, *Housing Alaskans: A Public-Private Partnership* (HAPPP), a broad coalition of housing stakeholders in our state, created a fund at ACF to help collectively address the housing shortages by incentivizing housing developers with operational and capital funding to help projects cross the finish line. HAPPP received a \$1 million contribution from the State of Alaska as well as both in-kind and monetary support from the Rasmuson Foundation to kickstart its efforts.

By not pursuing avenues of funding, the school district risks losing qualified candidates to fulfill the teacher needs at Newhalen School. Whether the funding comes from the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation Rural Professional Housing Grant Program or another funding source, LPSD can no longer wait to pursue this project. Adequate housing is critical to the recruitment and retention of teachers. LPSD is responsible for assuring village teachers have local housing. In the past, the Lake and Peninsula School District and Borough have stated they are committed to providing safe and adequate housing for its teachers. Currently, there are not enough units to appropriately house the number of teachers required for Newhalen School.

We urge you to pursue the Newhalen Duplex project by any means necessary.

Quyana/Chin'an for your consideration of our request.

Regards,

Newhalen School Local School Advisory Committee
Approved at the January 17, 2024 Meeting

Witnessed by
Evelynn Trefon, Vice President

Lydia Wassillie, Secretary
