

Greater Juneau Chamber of Commerce Assembly Candidate ZOOM Forum



Thursday - September 2nd , 2021 – 12:00 p.m.

Paul Kelly (District 1)

Barbara Blake (District 1)

Troy Wuyts-Smith (District 1)

Michelle Bonnet Hale (District 2)

Kelly Fishler (District 2)

DETAILS: Candidates are asked to provide written responses to the questions below. The questions and responses will be posted on the Juneau Chamber of Commerce website (juneauchamber.com) immediately following the candidate forum.

The forum itself will start with introductions from each candidate, followed by questions from the moderator, with one minute allowed per candidate to answer each one. The forum will conclude with a closing statement from each candidate of one minute. The questions will not be provided prior to the event but will likely address the local economy, crime, infrastructure, the city charter and/or recently proposed local ballot measures.

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

- 1. Do you believe that homelessness and drug and alcohol addiction are a major problem in Juneau? If so, what specific actions, if any, should the CBJ take to address homelessness and drug and alcohol addiction?**

Yes, both are significant problems. I support the collaborative efforts of non-profits and government (including the CBJ and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority) to develop the Housing First model and for co-locating allied social and health services nearby. I also commend Bartlett Regional Hospital's planned expansion of mental health facilities.

Low income housing has been a perennial challenge for Juneau. I have appreciated the city's willingness to partner with organizations like Tlingit-Haida Regional Housing Authority to provide land for housing. I support continued funding for the CBJ's full-time chief housing officer. I believe that we need to prepare for a winter warming shelter again this winter and view it as a responsibility of the city. I am concerned about unhoused youth who make up a significant portion of Juneau's homeless population

2. Should the CBJ encourage the development of more senior care facilities in Juneau? If so, what specifically should the CBJ do to encourage their development?

Juneau's senior population continues to grow in both absolute numbers and as a percentage of the overall population. Our seniors are major contributors, economically, socially and culturally, and we should encourage development of a range of resident options that will lead them to remain in the community. For that reason I support the development of more senior care facilities in Juneau. We must support our elders. We also must recognize that Juneau is a hub community in Southeast Alaska that provides access to medical care not available in many nearby towns and villages. I believe we must be leaders in Southeast to provide safe and affordable housing for seniors.

The CBJ can be a catalyst in supporting projects, as it did with Trillium Landing. Key to providing the range of options is partnerships with others like the regional housing authority and constantly monitoring for opportunities to access federal, state, or tribal dollars.

3. What are the top three critical capital projects that the CBJ should fund or actively support?

Dock electrification: *Juneau is an incredible tourist destination. Visitors from all over the world come to Alaska to breathe our clean air; view our mountains, glaciers, and wildlife; and to experience a different way of life. In addition, travelers from all over the world come via cruise ship to view one of the ["most beautiful and accessible glaciers in North America."](#) While I'm grateful for the influx of tourists to our community and resulting influx of dollars and jobs, I feel frustrated that the means of transit for many of those tourists relies on fossil fuels. While tourists are here in Juneau, learning about our shrinking glaciers and climate change at the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center, cruise ships are idling, spewing emissions and polluting air when in port. Our community - like many communities in Alaska - is experiencing the effects of climate change. I support dock electrification, so that cruise ships could plug in while in port and reduce pollution. As a member of the City and Borough Assembly, I would support the building of an additional dam to allow for dock electrification.*

Centennial Hall Renovations/Capital Civic Center: *Juneau is a hub community in Southeast, and needs a high-quality facility to host events and attract visitors from around the state and region, while also providing a gathering place for major events that are a regular part of Juneau's calendar. I salute the Chamber's efforts to push for a modern convention center and culture center that will serve the community for decades to come.*

North Douglas Second Crossing: *I believe that one of the main issues driving the lack of affordable housing in Juneau is the limited amount of borough land available for development. By working with the State to develop a North Douglas crossing, the City and Borough of Juneau would essentially make land in West Juneau more accessible and*

available to developers. This would be a benefit to the community at large because it could take some of the pressure off of the limited housing market.

Recent news about testing the stability of the Salmon Creek dam against a possible catastrophic event also highlights the fact that there is but a single access route between Downtown Juneau/Douglas and the Valley and, separately, between Douglas and all other points in the area. An additional crossing would address that vulnerability.

- 4. The issues related to the loss of the 2020 and most of 2021 cruise ship industry have caused significant harm to businesses and the families and workers that depend on them. What role do you believe CBJ should take in supporting these businesses and their recovery?**

The tourism industry in Juneau brings significant funds and jobs to our community, and the pandemic has been hard for those businesses that are largely dependent upon cruise ship tourism. A dramatically reduced cruise ship season has provided only partial relief for businesses that have had to endure more than a year without outside revenue and who are now facing another 8-9 months before the return of a more “normal” season. I would encourage the mayor to reinstitute the Economic Stabilization Task Force and evaluate the status of funds made available to the state and local governments under the CARES Act and subsequent federal legislation to look at re-instituting relief programs for businesses in distress

- 5. Do you believe that mining is an important part of our local economy and jobs? If so, what specifically should the CBJ do, if anything, to encourage, maintain, and grow a strong mining sector?**

Mining has been an integral part of Juneau’s development since its inception and is a driver of its future. Greens Creek and Echo Bay Mining are two of Juneau’s largest employers and our largest taxpayers. Aside from streamlined permitting of mining activity in Juneau—held to the highest environmental standards—the CBJ can best grow the industry through adequate infrastructure, providing career paths in secondary education and promoting UAS as a center for mining training.

- 6. Do you think the current landfill approach to disposing of the community’s trash is the right approach? If not, what other approach would you actively promote as a member of the Assembly?**

The city has undertaken studies in the past to deal with longer term waste management. Its diversion of hazardous waste and abandoned vehicles have been very successful programs. Waste Management and Capital Disposal have offered curbside recycling and sent that waste stream south. They have invested heavily to mitigate sight and smell issues. While Juneau needs to identify a long-term alternative site, it is in Juneau’s financial interest to take whatever steps it can to prolong the useful life of our current landfill. One obvious step is to bar cruise ships from offloading their waste streams into the landfill.

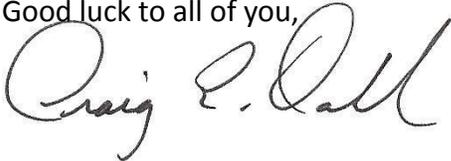
7. Do you support increasing, reducing or holding Juneau property taxes at the current level?

I see no justification under current conditions to raise Juneau's property tax mil rate. I am not yet prepared to say whether it should remain the same or be reduced because I have not been through the budget cycle. I am aware of the adverse impact that dramatically increased valuations on business real property valuations have had on businesses this year. Recognizing that the assessor is charged with determining the fair market value, my role as assembly member is to examine the rate. I will do so, keeping in mind its impact on the business community at a time of great hardship.

Your responses should be emailed to Maggie McMillan, Executive Assistant mmcmillan@juneauchamber.com by end of day Wednesday, September 1st.

Thank for taking the time to respond to these questions. For incumbents, thank you for your service to the assembly and willingness to continue to serve. For the new candidates, thank you for stepping forward.

Good luck to all of you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig E. Dahl". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Craig E. Dahl, Executive Director
Greater Juneau Chamber of Commerce