

March 5, 2007

Beach options on boro agenda

By ANDREW DAMSTEDT

Daily News Staff Writer

The Ketchikan Gateway Borough Assembly will consider a request from Ketchikan Beaches Association to direct staff to search for alternatives to keep Alaska Mental Health Trust land available for public use.

In their background statement, the Ketchikan Beaches Association suggested three possibilities that staff could research: a land exchange, a community enhancement project and the beaches being acquired by other agencies such as state parks.

The mental health trust owns Survey Point, Coast Guard beach, South Point Higgins beach, the Whipple Creek beach and the Mountain Point boat launch and beach. KBA is pursuing acquiring Coast Guard Beach and Survey Point, according to KBA coordinator Carrie Dolwick.

The Assembly postponed until October a memorandum of agreement with the trust for assurance of public use at Coast Guard beach at its Feb. 5 meeting. The trust is seeking to develop the property.

Dolwick said the association has submitted an application to the trust to negotiate a sale of Coast Guard beach instead of going through a competitive bid process. She said the association is asking for borough for support in coming up with reasons why the trust should accept a negotiated sale with the community.

“We are trying to get the borough to engage early in the process,” Dolwick said. Borough Manager Roy Eckert said Friday that he is concerned about KBA’s request because Coast Guard beach is private property.

“This is a very unusual situation, where the borough staff is being asked to do something with private property owned by another agency,” Eckert said. “It’s highly unusual for any government or staff to get involved with determining how to procure that for another group.”

He said the best option would be for KBA to purchase the property. Another good option, he said, would be having the borough host a summit with all involved parties to find out the trust’s plans for the areas.

“I think if all people get in one room one time, that the borough could assume the lead role on that,” Eckert said.

Eckert said the earliest a summit could be put together would be the week of March 19.

Dolwick said there is a lot of community support to preserve Coast Guard beach. She said

the association has gathered more than 200 signatures of people who want to see that beach preserved for public use.

“There are many community members that are interested in preserving Coast Guard beach,” Dolwick said. “And they are all types of people. People traditionally pro-development still support this project because of the limited shoreline available for recreation and unique character of Coast Guard beach.”