



Sutton Community Council

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Director

Every person in Sutton is a piece of the puzzle and we each need to find where we fit. As the puzzle becomes more complete, our community will become a better place to live and work for us and for the next generation.

To: Alaska Governor Bill Walker
Cc: Alaska Department of Corrections
Commissioner Dean Williams

Dear Governor Walker,

It has recently been brought to the attention of the Sutton Community Council that the Palmer Correctional Center will be closing down. Yesterday evening we held a community council meeting attended by local residents and employees of the Department of Corrections.

This sudden determination to close Palmer Correctional Center will have a negative effect on our community and raises questions about the feasibility of this decision. Why was there no public hearing?

Over the years, the Palmer Correctional Center and the community of Sutton have developed a good neighborly relationship. Employees of DOC and their families live here and contribute to this community. Prisoners interacting within this community have already created an environment more conducive to transitional living. Inmates from Palmer have provided volunteer services locally including the annual cleanup of the Jonesville Mine area and the construction of a children's playground at the Sutton Historical Park. Patronage of the Sutton Post Office by the PCC population was instrumental in the US Postal Service decision to keep our Post Office open in Sutton.

There are many other reasons to reevaluate the closure of the Palmer Correctional Center. The State has invested in improvements there such as a new shooting range for training, a large capacity water holding tank, fire hydrants and new boiler system. Again, it supports our local Post Office. The close proximity to Mat-Su Pretrial and the McKinley Meat Plant already saves the State money. Historically, they have grown food there too and provided firewood to senior citizens.

How precisely does closing down the Palmer facility save money by crowding other state prisons and potentially forcing DOC to export prisoners out of state creating the same legal issues we experienced in the past? Governor, why did your office ignore specific cost cutting recommendations submitted by the employees of the Department of Corrections months ago?

At this point in time the closure of the Palmer Correctional Center does not make a lot of sense to residents in this area and DOC employees. We have been denied being part of this decision making process and expect more from our elected officials. With all due respect, the citizens of Alaska demand a public review and hearing over the closure of this facility. Hasty political decisions will only end up hurting us.

Sincerely,

Mark Bertels

Sutton Community Council – Chair

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Cc: Senator Mike Dunleavy, MSB Mayor Vern Halter, MSB Manager John Moosey,
MSB Assemblyman Jim Sykes