

July 23, 2026

City & Borough of Juneau

Katie Koester, City Manager

Robert Barr, Deputy City Manager

Mayor Beth Weldon and Members of the Assembly

Chief Derek Bos, Juneau Police Department

Chief Thomas Hatley, Capital City Fire/Rescue (CCFR)

Dan Bleidorn, Manager, Division of Lands & Resources

Central Council of the Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska

President Richard Chalyee Éesh Peterson

Alaska Electric Power & Light

Alec J. Mesdag

Re: Armed encampment and public-safety hazard on Capital Ave

To the officials and offices named above:

The encampment on Capital Avenue, a longtime obnoxious nuisance, has become a threat to public safety.

Earlier this month, a person living in that camp shot a young black bear that was up a tree at the edge of the encampment. The animal was grievously wounded, and a Fish and Game officer had to track it down to put the young bear out of its misery.

The shots that wounded the bear were fired upward, likely toward the Fosbee, a 30-unit apartment building directly above the site. The apartment building is in our densely populated Governor's Mansion neighborhood.

We live at 354 Distin Ave., directly across from the Fosbee Apartments. We ask that the squatter camp on Capital Ave. be removed before someone is seriously hurt.

According to the CBJ Parcel Viewer, this encampment is on city land and shares boundaries with property owned by AEL&P, the Central Council, and a privately owned parcel (701 Capital Ave). All these properties are adversely affected by the encampment and its widely scattered piles of garbage, which are irresistible to bears.

This did not come out of nowhere. For years, the camp has created conditions no neighborhood should have to endure: clouds of toxic smoke, garbage piles measured by the truckload, and human and household waste left directly on the ground. Discarded hypodermic needles litter the area around the camp and have been dragged with other refuse by bears into the surrounding neighborhood, presenting hazards to people, pets, and wildlife.

When one of us stopped by to ask two of the occupants about the toxic smoke, their twitchy behavior was consistent with heavy methamphetamine or similar stimulant use.

Frequently, in the pre-dawn hours, residents are woken by disturbances from the site, where drugs are used openly and what appear to be drug sales occur. Now that we know the people in this camp are armed and willing to fire weapons with no regard for who is nearby, we have reason to fear for our safety.

Since the encampment is on city-owned property, CBJ clearly has the authority and responsibility to act, and its ownership removes any question of deferring to another party. The city's own guidance calls for intervention once an encampment repeatedly harms the surrounding community, with trash accumulation and open drug use named as the triggers. This camp crossed that line years ago and has now escalated to gunfire toward occupied homes. Recent court decisions have also made clear that CBJ may enforce limits on camping on public land, so this is well within its authority.

Clearing the camp by itself will not fix this. The city has collaborated with AEL&P to remove encampments like this that have crossed the line, and with the Central Council to clean up this site.

We are now asking the city, through the Division of Lands & Resources and the Police Department, to clear the Capital Avenue camp, clean up the site, and then secure the area against re-encampment so that this stops being a recurring hazard, and to coordinate any support services the occupants may need as part of that process.

Photographs documenting current conditions at the site are attached to this letter.

We would appreciate a written response identifying who is handling this matter and what will be done. Thank you for your attention to a serious hazard in the heart of our community.

Respectfully,

Sandra and Peter Metcalfe, 354 Distin Ave., and on behalf of the following residents of the Governor's Mansion neighborhood:

Jared Cure, owner of the Fosbee Apartments, 361 Distin Ave.

Logan Lott, resident of the Fosbee Apartments, Apt. #207

Angela Rodell, 316 Distin Ave.

Ann and Michael Dombkowski, 239 W. 7th

Doug Koester, 330 W. 8th

Mark Choate, 230 W Eighth St