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VALDEZ, ALASKA

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January 19, 2016

Lee Revis
THE VALDEZ STAR
P.O. Box 2949
Valdez, AK 99686

Dear Lee:

Opinion Piece #3 for Valdez Star

You've never seen Valdez Bay in its full glory, if you've not seen it from the top of Meals Hill.

Long inaccessible, with only a roughed-in road, this special vantage point is the Port Valdez Company's most cherished property. With a pristine, park-like setting and amazing million-dollar views of the Bay, standing on that hill feels almost like a form of time travel. You can see all of Valdez's past – and maybe all of its future as well.

That's why The Port Valdez Co.(PVC) is collaborating with a museum design firm to develop a vision and strategy for the best use of this property. Solid Light is a company that has, for 16 years, worked with communities around the country to create museum-based "destinations," state-of-the-art educational and cultural museum experiences that anchor commercial centers of economic development. PVC has made an offer to donate land on Meals Hill for the new museum and to provide additional hiking trails for the City of Valdez, including a new hotel, restaurant. Our offer and additional ideas were presented to the Board of Directors of the Valdez Museum, Valdez City Council and management. We now would also like to invite the residents of Valdez to join in the discussion of economic development options for Meals Hill.

Nearly 10,000 people visited Valdez in 2015 – significantly contributing to our economy. Imagine if we could entice each of these people to stay a little longer, or bring another person with them. A top-notch museum, good local restaurants, a boutique hotel – these are the type of amenities that encourage ice climbers or fishing enthusiasts to bring their families and stay for an extra weekend, spending additional money that can potentially multiply many times over in the Valdez economy.



Opinion Piece
January 19, 2016
Page 2 of 2

For years, we've been discussing arrangements in which The Port Valdez Company would donate 6 prime acres of what we now call "Museum Hill" for the development of a new location for the Valdez Museum. This would be a fitting step for the Port Valdez Company, which is owned by the Hazelet and Meals families who homesteaded this region during the 1898 Alaska Gold Rush. Those families, as you know, donated over 116 acres of those homesteads to rebuild Valdez after the 1964 earthquake.

In recent years, the two families have been discussing ways in which The Port Valdez Company can continue to contribute to Valdez in a positive manner. Our offer to donate 6 prime acres of "Meals Hill" for the new museum is only one suggestion. Maybe someone else in the community has dreamed of a more dynamic use of Meals Hill? If so, we would love to hear from you.

Solid Light's experiences have allowed us to share its perspective and understanding of museum "destinations" and their role in economic development. The Port Valdez Company believes now, more than ever, that in order for Valdez to have a bold, dynamic and growing future, we must make these sorts of investments in education, quality of life, and tourism amenities. With new leadership joining the community at the city management level, the energy is high and full of anticipation in Valdez. Now is the time to start meaningful and actionable steps to frame the future of Valdez.

Please email us (john@portvaldezco.com) or go to our web site www.portvaldezco.com and click on the "contact tab" with any comment, support or just conversation about what you think is important to a bright future for Valdez. We will listen and want to help.

John Clark, President of The Port Valdez Company
Philip Clark, Vice President of The Port Valdez Company