To: Mayor Shelley Owens February 11, 2024

City Administrator Kathy Leary

Gustavus City Council members

Gustavus Road Committee members

Greetings!

I am writing to bring attention to an issue that I believe will become more and more pressing as time goes on. I have talked a little about this issue with some of you, but would like to put my concerns and questions into writing for all of you.

I live on a road that is not a City road. Neither is it a private road, being built on a platted public right-of-way and a section line. When I moved into my new house in 2020, I was the third resident of Royal Road. Now there are five of us and the potential for up to two or three more may be imminent.

Royal Road has been built in sections as each new property owner needed access; three different roadbuilders with three different styles. The homeowners on the road share expenses for snowplowing and when improvements need to be made. This is manageable for now, but will become increasingly difficult as more people are involved, some being year-round residents and some seasonal. Not every homeowner is or will be equally amicable to the joint effort.

About a year ago I approached then-Mayor Mike Taylor and I had a good discussion with him about what it would take to have the City of Gustavus take over the road maintenance. I also communicated with Justin Marchbanks for information on costs for improvements. Unfortunately, my neighbors and I are not in a position to put the estimated $12,000 or more into making the necessary improvements to meet City standards for road construction. The high cost of improvements is partially due to the fact that the road currently is inconsistent in quality and would basically need to be rebuilt.

This leaves us in a position where we need to maintain the road for our own access as well as access for emergency vehicles in case of fire or medical emergencies, and we could be left to do so for a very long time. Most of us are senior citizens on a fixed income, meaning we have little in the way of funds as well as a higher potential for medical emergencies. In addition, I know that we are not the only residents in this situation, there being several other roads currently maintained with personal funds. Many may be happy with that situation, and I am also willing to be content for the time being.

However, we continue to pay the same taxes as all residents, but receive fewer services, and could find ourselves unable to receive emergency services due to poor road access. I bring this to your attention as I believe that as Gustavus grows and more properties are needing to be accessed, this situation will crop up more and more, and people may begin to demand more from the City in the form of road access and maintenance. I understand that much of this the result of subdivisions that were/are created with public right-of-ways in place, but no actual roads.

I would like to see some thought put into this situation now, so that perhaps a solution can be found that will benefit not only me and my neighbors but other Gustavus residents who find themselves in the same situation. I appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sally McLaughlin