



City and Borough of Wrangell  
Planning and Zoning Commission  
AGENDA

Thursday, January 25, 2024  
5:30 PM

Location: Borough Assembly Chambers  
City Hall

Planning and Zoning Commission  
5:30 PM

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

**2. ROLL CALL**

**3. AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA**

**4. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**6. CORRESPONDENCE**

**7. PERSONS TO BE HEARD**

**8. NEW BUSINESS**

- a. Approval of the Planning and Zoning Commission report on the findings for a decision on the petition to Rezone Lot 5, Block 1, according to Plat 83-11 of Wrangell Island West, zoned Rural Residential changing the zoning district from Rural Residential 1 (RR1) to Rural Remote Unit (RMU) requested by Christian Ryll.

**9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**10. COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

**City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska**  
**Planning and Zoning Commission**  
**Regular Meeting January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024**  
**Staff Report**

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**Agenda Item:** New Business, Item 8A

**From:** Kate Thomas, Economic Development Director

**Subject:** Approval of the Planning and Zoning Commission report on the findings for a decision on the petition to Rezone Lot 5, Block 1, according to Plat 83-11 of Wrangell Island West, zoned Rural Residential changing the zoning district from Rural Residential 1 (RR1) to Rural Remote Unit (RMU) requested by Christian Ryll.

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**Background:** On December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the Planning and Zoning Commission voted to deny the petition to Rezone Lot 5, Block 1, according to Plat 83-11 of Wrangell Island West, zoned Rural Residential changing the zoning district from Rural Residential 1 (RR1) to Rural Remote Unit (RMU) requested by Christian Ryll.

As a requirement of the code, the Commission shall submit a report to the Borough Assembly outlining the findings of its decision on recommendations regarding any amendments that affect the zoning regulations of the City and Borough of Wrangell. Included herein is the report drafted on behalf of the Commission by the Planning Administrator, Kate Thomas which details the findings for a decision to deny the request to rezone Lot 5, Block 1 from Rural Residential to Remote Mixed Use.

**Attachments:**

1.) Planning and Zoning Commission Report, 2.) Staff Report, 3.) Letter to Mr. Ryll outlining the process 4.) Aerial Map 5.) Original Petition to Rezone

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommend that the Planning and Zoning Commission approve the report.

**Recommended Motion:**

Motion to approve the Planning and Zoning Commission report on the findings for denying Mr. Christian Ryll's petition to rezone Lot 5, Block 1, according to Plat No, 83-11 of the Wrangell Island West Subdivision, zoned Rural Residential 1, changing the zoning to Remote Mixed Use.



**CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL**  
INCORPORATED MAY 30, 2008

**Planning and Zoning Commission**

PO Box 531, Wrangell, AK 99929  
Phone (907)-874-3902

Date: January 25, 2024

To: Assembly of the City and Borough of Wrangell

From: The Planning and Zoning Commission

Subject: Petition to Rezone Lot 5, Block 1, according to Plat 83-11 of Wrangell Island West, zoned Rural Residential changing the zoning district from Rural Residential 1 (RR1) to Rural Remote Unit (RMU) requested by Christian Ryll.

**Recommended Action:**

The Planning and Zoning Commission recommends that the Borough Assembly deny Mr. Ryll's petition for the following reasons: the property is zoned as RR1 consistent with the adjacent properties, the request is to exclusively rezone one parcel in an area with existing zoning, it is in relative proximity to connecting infrastructure, it is not the only parcel that does not have direct access as per the comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan clearly designates Wrangell Island West subdivision as rural residential with capacity for future growth and there is no direct benefit to the greater public other than the perceived benefit to Mr. Ryll.

**Introduction:**

Zoning change and/or amendment means the alteration or moving of a district boundary, the reclassification of a lot or parcel of land from one district to another, or the change of any of the regulations contained within the Wrangell Municipal Code. Changes to Title 20: Zoning of the Wrangell Municipal Code (WMC 20.76.020) may be initiated by the following means: By the Borough Assembly on its own motion; By the Commission on its own motion; By petition signed by 50% property owners within the area being proposed for rezoning. In this case, Mr. Christian Ryll is the sole petitioner. Mr. Ryll has submitted a request to rezone Lot 5, Block 1, Wrangell Island West, from Rural Residential 1 (RR1) to Remote Mixed Use (RMU). The request aims to rezone a single parcel within an existing zoning district. Mr. Ryll contends that zoning his property as Rural Residential was an oversight when the City and Borough of Wrangell was formed (2008), as it is the only remote access property that is not zoned RMU.

On December 14, the Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed Mr. Ryll's request. The Planning Administrator recommended that the Commission deny (or vote No) the request as a

recommendation to the Assembly, who by jurisdiction makes the final determination on zoning amendments as they are a legislative matter. The Commission based its recommendation to the Assembly to deny the petition to rezone on the following findings and information.

### **Zoning District Descriptions:**

To provide context, it is essential to review the characteristics of both the Rural Residential 1 (RR1) and Remote Mixed Use (RMU) zoning districts:

The rural residential district (WMC 20.28.010) is intended to provide for low impact land and water uses and activities in areas that are not suitable or desirable for intensive development due to their distance from established utility service areas, existing large lot development or existing rural lifestyles. These areas shall be protected from high density or incompatible development in order to maintain their character and avoid the high public costs associated with utility service for outlying or scattered development. Within the rural residential districts, low density uses, compatible with the character of the district, are encouraged provided they will not require public sewers, water systems or high-volume traffic arteries.

The remote residential mixed-use district (WMC 20.31.010) is intended to provide for very low impact land and water uses and activities in remote areas of the borough. Such areas are not suitable or desirable for intensive development due to their lack of a developed road system, distance from established utility service areas, existing large lot development, and existing rural and subsistence lifestyles.

### **Property Description and Surrounding Conditions:**

Mr. Ryll's property is situated in the Wrangell Island West subdivision, in proximity to the 13-Mile Zimovia Highway. Notably, there are four other privately owned parcels within Block 1 (Lot 1, 2, 3, 4) immediately south of Mr. Ryll's property. Legal access to Lots 1-4 is facilitated through a privately maintained driveway connected to Zimovia Highway. This driveway extends approximately 2,800 feet from the highway, terminating approximately 500 feet from the southern property line of Mr. Ryll's parcel.

South of Mr. Ryll's property is large parcel of land know as Tract C, which is Borough-owned land acquired through the Borough Entitlement process. Although the Borough does not yet possess a patent for this land, it has been informed by the State of Alaska that a survey has been conducted, and the patent should be forthcoming. The Planning and Zoning Commission and Economic Development Board have suggested residential development for this section of entitlement lands, to be zoned Rural Residential in harmony with adjacent subdivisions.

### **Comprehensive Plan Considerations:**

The Wrangell Comprehensive Plan highlights that several services are not provided area-wide, including drinking water, electrical power service, fire protection, road and sidewalk maintenance, sewer service, solid waste collection and disposal, and vehicle and traffic control. While city water and sewer services extend up to the 6-mile (Zimovia Highway) old mill site, residences to the south rely on individual septic systems and alternate water sources such as

rainwater or wells. It is crucial to note that much of Wrangell zoned for residential use with water and sewer access is already developed. However, the comprehensive plan identifies 41 lots lacking either access, services, or both, and 16 parcels suitable for service and subdivision into smaller residential lots. There are no city-owned roads, water, or sewer services directly connecting to Mr. Ryll's property, however it is not the only parcel with such limits within residential districts. Therefore, a change in the zoning of this parcel would be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan which designates parcels south of Pat's Creek, north of Nemo Loop a residential area targeted for potential future growth within the Borough.

### **Zoning Amendments and Spot Zoning Considerations:**

The term "spot zoning" refers to the rezoning of a small, isolated area to a different classification than its surrounding properties. This practice can raise concerns about equitable land use regulation and may be incongruent with the comprehensive plan for the jurisdiction. In the present case, the rezoning request may result in spot zoning as it proposes a different designation of zoning district for Mr. Ryll's property compared to the adjacent rural residential lots.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation:**

While the Commission is not qualified to issue legal rulings on spot zoning, it plays a role in flagging potential instances of this concern. Evaluation of spot zoning necessitates an examination of circumstances, considering various factors such as parcel size, anticipated public benefits, alignment with the comprehensive plan, and compatibility with neighboring zoning and land uses. This evaluation applies to any proposed amendments to the zoning laws, districts and maps of the City and Borough of Wrangell.

In conclusion, the Planning and Zoning Commission recommends that the Borough Assembly deny Mr. Ryll's petition for the following reasons; the property is zoned as RR1 consistent with the adjacent properties, the request is to exclusively rezone one parcel in an area with existing zoning, it is in relative proximity to connecting infrastructure, it is not the only parcel that does not have direct access as per the comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan clearly designates Wrangell Island West subdivision as rural residential with capacity for future growth and there is no direct benefit to the greater public other than the perceived benefit to Mr. Ryll.

**City and Borough of Wrangell, Alaska**  
**Planning and Zoning Commission**  
**Regular Meeting December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023**  
**Staff Report**

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**Agenda Item:** New Business, Item 8B

**From:** Kate Thomas, Economic Development Director

**Subject:** (PH) Petition to Rezone Lot 5, Block 1, according to Plat 83-11 of Wrangell Island West, zoned Rural Residential changing the zoning district from Rural Residential 1 (RR1) to Rural Remote Unit (RMU) requested by Christian Ryll.

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**Finds of Fact:** Mr. Christian Ryll submitted a letter of petition requesting that Lot 5, Block 1, Wrangell Island West be changed from Rural Residential 1 (RR1) to Remote Mixed Use (RMU). Mr. Ryll stated in his letter that when the City and Borough of Wrangell was formed his property was the only remote access property that was not zoned RMU, therefore suggesting that it was an oversight.

The rural residential district ([WMC 20.28.010](#)) is intended to provide for low impact land and water uses and activities in areas that are not suitable or desirable for intensive development due to their distance from established utility service areas, existing large lot development or existing rural lifestyles. These areas shall be protected from high density or incompatible development in order to maintain their character and avoid the high public costs associated with utility service for outlying or scattered development. Within the rural residential districts, low density uses, compatible with the character of the district, are encouraged provided they will not require public sewers, water systems or high-volume traffic arteries.

The remote residential mixed-use district ([WMC 20.31.010](#)) is intended to provide for very low impact land and water uses and activities in remote areas of the borough. Such areas are not suitable or desirable for intensive development due to their lack of a developed road system, distance from established utility service areas, existing large lot development, and existing rural and subsistence lifestyles.

Mr. Ryll's property is in the Wrangell Island West subdivision, located proximate to 13 - Mile Zimovia Highway. There are four other parcels within Block 1 (Lot 1, 2, 3, 4) that are immediately south of the Ryll property that are privately owned. Legal access to Lots 1-4 is via a privately maintained driveway that connects to Zimovia Highway. The driveway is approximately 2,800 ft long, stemming from the highway and terminates approximately 500 ft from the Ryll's southern property line.

The surrounding land, otherwise known as Tract C, is Borough-owned that was obtained through the Borough Entitlement process. The Borough does not have a patent for the land but has been told by the State of Alaska that the land has been surveyed and the patent should be forthcoming. Suggested land use for this section of entitlement lands as proposed by the Planning and Zoning Commission and Economic Development Board includes residential development to be zoned the same as adjacent subdivisions.

As per the Wrangell Comprehensive Plan some services are not provided area-wide including drinking water, electrical power service, fire protection, road and sidewalk maintenance, sewer service, solid waste collection and disposal, and vehicle and traffic control. City water and sewer services are in place up to the 6-mile (Zimovia Highway) old mill site; residences to the south have individual septic systems and rely on rainwater or wells for their water supply. Much, but not all of Wrangell that is zoned residential and has water and sewer access is already developed. As per the plan, there are 41 lots that are missing either access, services, or both, and 16 parcels that could be serviced and subdivided into smaller residential lots. There is no city owned roads, water, or sewer services directly connecting to Mr. Ryll's property.

Zoning change means the alteration or moving of a district boundary, the reclassification of a lot or parcel of land from one district to another, or the change of any of the regulations contained within the Wrangell Municipal Code. Spot zoning occurs when a small, isolated area is rezoned to a different classification than the surrounding properties. This can raise concerns about the equitable distribution of land use regulations and may not align with the comprehensive plan for the jurisdiction. In this case, the rezoning request would result in spot zoning because the subject property would have a different designation than the adjacent rural residential lots.

**Attachments:**

1.) Petition to Rezone from Christian Ryll, 2.) Aerial Map, 3.) Plat No. 83-11

**Recommendation:**

Staff **do not** recommend that the Planning and Zoning Commission approve the request to rezone Lot 5, Block 1, according to Plat 83-11.

**Recommended Motion:**

Motion to approve the Mr. Christian Ryll's petition to rezone Lot 5, Block 1, according to Plat No, 83-11 of the Wrangell Island West Subdivision, zoned Rural Residential 1, changing the zoning to Remote Mixed Use.



**CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL**  
INCORPORATED MAY 30, 2008

**Economic Development & Planning Department**

PO Box 531, Wrangell, AK 99929  
Phone (907)-874-3902

January 23, 2024

Dear Mr. Ryll,

I am writing to provide you with a formal clarification regarding the procedures outlined in my previous communication dated December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023. It has come to my attention that the information provided regarding the process for amendments to the zoning map requires correction. Amendments to the map are considered a legislative matter. In this regard, the Borough Assembly is the legislative body that has authority over amendments to the zoning map. As such they will be tasked with the final determination on any requests to rezone an area of land. Consequently, the appeal processed outlined in the code is not applicable to your request as originally stated.

As per Wrangell Municipal Code section 20.76.030, before any proposed zoning change may be acted upon by the Assembly. The Planning and Zoning Commission shall hold a public hearing on the proposed change, preceded by a thorough review and report by the zoning administrator. This requirement was satisfactorily met with the publication of the planning administrator's report on Friday, December 8, 2023, and the subsequent public hearing held on Thursday, December 14, 2023, during the commission's regularly scheduled meeting.

Within 45 days from the date of the hearing, the commission must conduct a comprehensive study of the proposed change. Subsequently, they must submit a written report to the Assembly. The report shall include; (1) Findings as to need and justification for the proposed change including findings as to the effect which the proposed change would have on the objectives of the comprehensive plan; (2) Findings as to the effect which the proposed change would have on property owners in the area of proposed boundary changes, including changes in traffic flow, population, density, off-street parking, sewer and water services; and (3) Recommendation as to the approval or disapproval of the change.

Given that your request pertains to the rezoning of a single parcel within the Rural Residential District, as opposed to a broader rezoning initiative covering multiple parcels within a district, the commission is obligated to assess various factors in their decision-making process to evaluate whether the zoning amendment could result in spot zoning. These factors encompass the consistency of the amendment with the comprehensive plan, the benefits and detriments associated with the amendment for property owners, adjacent landowners, and the community at large, as well as the size of the area subject to rezoning. These considerations underscore the importance of maintaining fairness, equitable treatment, transparency, adherence to the comprehensive plan, and compliance with planning goals and regulations.

On Thursday, January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 5:30PM with the information provided by staff at their disposal, the commission will review a report for their approval on the findings for their decision, which is slated for submission to the Assembly. In accordance with Wrangell Municipal Code section 20.76.040, the Assembly is mandated to hold a public hearing on the proposed zoning amendment within 30 days from the filing of



the commission's report. Should the Borough Assembly determine that approving the proposed zoning change is in the best interest of the public, they retain the authority to enact the change via ordinance. The upcoming public hearing is scheduled for February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 6:00 PM, in the Assembly Chambers of City Hall and will be conducted during the regularly scheduled Assembly Meeting.

Should you require any further explanation regarding the contents of this letter, or the procedures delineated by the Wrangell Municipal Code, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. You're understanding and cooperation in this matter are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

*Kate Thomas*

Kate Thomas

Director of Economic Development and Planning



1 inch = 354.561529 feet  
 Date: 12/9/2023

Public Map



**DISCLAIMER: THESE MAPS ARE FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY.  
 PROPERTY LINES ARE APPROXIMATE. AERIAL 2002.**

20-1012  
62/  
**RECEIVED**  
AUG 03 2023  
WRANGELL CITY HALL

August 3, 2023

Christian Ryll  
P.O. Box 2273  
Wrangell, AK 99929

City and Borough Of Wrangell  
P.O. Box 2273  
Wrangell, AK 99929

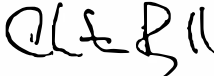
RE: Rezoning Request for Lot 5, Block 1, Wrangell Island West

Dear C & B of Wrangell official,

I am writing to request that the zoning for Lot 5, Block 1, Wrangell Island West be changed from RR1 to RMU for this remote access lot.

It appears that when the City and Borough was formed that this property was the only remote access property that was not zoned RMU. I am requesting that this oversight be corrected.

Sincerely,



Christian Ryll

907-830-9345  
v.8.ryll@gmail.com

Christian Ryll