

Memorandum 11-028 Snow Plowing at the Pratt Museum

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Memorandum Status: Backup

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TO: MAYOR HORNADAY AND HOMER CITY COUNCIL

FROM: WALT WREDE

DATE: FEBRUARY 28, 2011

SUBJECT: SNOW PLOWING AT THE PRATT MUSEUM

The City of Homer has included the Pratt Museum in the snowplowing contract it enters into with a private contractor for plowing and sanding services at various City parking lots. This has been the case for many years. The rationale for doing this was that it would save the Pratt money if it were included in a much larger City contract for these services. Up until 2007, the practice was that the City contractor would plow the Pratt parking lot and the City would then send monthly invoices, which the Pratt would pay. The records show that the City has been sending invoices as far back as 1989. The average yearly cost of plowing the Pratt has been about \$2,000. The City stopped sending invoices to the Pratt in 2007 and did not send any for the years 2007, 2008, and 2009. This did not come to anyone's attention for several reasons. The Pratt Museum did not take notice or raise the issue because they thought everything was as it should be. The Pratt believed the City made a decision back in 2006 or 2007 that it would provide this "in-kind" service to the Pratt because it could not afford to provide funding at the level requested. In other words, this was a less expensive way of providing support. This discussion took place at a time when the Pratt was seeking an increase in funding and the Council was struggling to make cuts and balance the budget. Providing this service as an "in-kind" contribution in lieu of increased funding was definitely an option that was discussed. However, a thorough review of the record by the Clerk's office provides no evidence that the Council took any official action on this idea (although that may have been its intent). Nevertheless, you can imagine the Pratt's surprise and dismay when it received an overdue snowplowing bill this year for four years of prior service. The bill exceeded \$7,000 dollars and the Pratt states that it did not anticipate or budget for this expense and does not have the money to pay.

The Finance Department states that it was not aware of any change in policy with respect to snowplowing at the Pratt. The Finance Director says that staff turnover and a reassignment of duties among staff members simply resulted in this falling through the cracks. In short, nobody realized until late last year that invoices were not being sent and that the Pratt had not paid for this service for several years. This may be partly explained by the fact that this is a relatively small amount of money. However, the Finance Department takes full responsibility for the oversight. In addition, I made it known that I was not happy about the City sending the Pratt a bill "out of the blue" for four years of past service.

I am sponsoring the attached resolution in order to get this issue on the table so that the Council can provide clarity and make its intent known. I am willing to write off a significant part of the bill for prior service because of the misunderstanding on the part of the Pratt and inaction and lack of communication on the part of the City. However, even if part of this bill is written off, we still need to know the Council's wishes going forward. Based upon the historical average, I would guess that providing this service would amount to about a \$2,500 contribution per year. So, the question before the Council is whether it wishes to provide this service as an "in-kind" contribution in 2011 and beyond or continue to charge the Pratt for this service. A yes vote on the resolution means the Council wishes to provide the service at no charge to the museum. A no vote means the City will continue to bill.

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend a yes vote on this resolution. The Council can take this contribution into consideration when it approves future budgets and Pratt Museum contributions. Further, doing this eliminates accounting and bills payable work for both the City and the Pratt; a significant amount of monthly work in the winter months for a relatively small amount of money.

Related Resolutions **Memorandum - Related Resolutions:** [Resolution 11-022\(A\) Intent to Continue Including the Pratt Museum in the City Contract for Snowplowing and Sanding Services](#)

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