

MANAGERS REPORT
February 28, 2011

TO: MAYOR HORNADAY / HOMER CITY COUNCIL

FROM: WALT WREDE

UPDATES / FOLLOW-UP

1. Fire Training Facility: The fire training facility has arrived in Homer and it is now located at its new home adjacent to the Chip Pad on the Spit. HVFD is presently looking into fencing the area for security reasons and finding the resources to move the fire hydrant to the other side of the street for easier access. Chief Painter is currently planning a “train the trainers” session to familiarize key people with the facility and equipment. A dedication ceremony and open house will be held later this Spring when it warms up a bit. We will keep you informed.
2. Bridge Creek Fire Mitigation Project: At the time this report was written, it was looking increasingly likely that no work will take place this winter. The Spruce Bark Beetle Program staff are extremely busy and no contracts for this project have yet been executed. Further, recent snows have left us with a snow depth that is not conducive to the operation of mechanized equipment. Things could change, but at this point we are likely looking at some hand work and tree stock assessment this summer, and more intensive mechanized work next winter. The Borough has confirmed that the money will be available for the project again next year.
3. Staff Turnover: Library Director Helen Hill has formally submitted her resignation letter and will be retiring at the end of April. We are currently advertising for the position and have been informed by members of the State Library Board that they believe we will get some very qualified candidates. We sure hope they are correct. This week I started the interview process for the Personnel Director position. I am hoping to get someone in that position as quickly as possible so that they can get some training and orientation with Sheri before she departs at the end of April. Sheri is working hard to complete the parity study before she leaves.
4. Potential Cuts to Borough College Funding: You may already be aware that Mayor Carey has proposed eliminating Borough funding for the college system on the Peninsula. He has also proposed eliminating tuition waivers for Peninsula residents. One of the primary stated reasons for proposing this is that the Borough needs money for the Homer landfill project. The voters authorized the Borough to contribute up to one tenth of a Mil to the college system back in 1990. This year the Borough contributed \$637,570 to the University system. Of that amount, \$194,800 or about 31% came to the Kachemak Bay Campus here in Homer. Carol Swartz, the local campus director reports that if eliminated, this funding would directly affect core services such as GED programs, the college library, tutoring, student advisors, testing, and more. It is my understanding that the City of Kenai

has already adopted a resolution opposing this proposal and other Cities in the Borough are considering doing the same. Supporting the local college campus is a big part of the City Comprehensive Plan and the College is a significant part of the local economy. Please let us know if you would like to sponsor a resolution. We can help draft it and get it on the next Council agenda.

5. City Hall Expansion / Renovation: The Task Force, the Public Works Director, and the contractors are working very hard to keep us on the ambitious construction schedule established by the Council. This project has taken priority over others at the moment, as requested by Council. A construction contract has been signed and a number of alterations have already been made to the draft site and building plans based upon input from the staff, the department heads, the architect, the building contractor, and the Task Force. At its meeting on Tuesday, the 22nd, the Task Force reviewed preliminary site and building plans, and a preliminary cost estimate for accomplishing all of the items on the current “wish list”. The contractor was looking for feedback on the general direction this project is taking so that we do not waste unnecessary money later on architectural and planning work. The Task Force was presented with a very preliminary spreadsheet showing what could be accomplished with the amount of money available and what additional, identified priority items would cost. The Task Force agreed that the additional items were very desirable and necessary and encouraged us to continue planning as though those items would be included in the final project budget. Accomplishing those items would save the City money in the long run. The additional cost is about \$275,000, much of which could be accomplished with depreciation and energy efficiency funds. The Council members on the Task Force are hoping to bring the Council up to speed at this meeting. The task force will receive costs estimates that are more refined at its next meeting.
6. Lobbyist: Things are working smoothly with the new lobbyist team so far. They really enjoyed their visit to Homer. Please let me know how you would like to receive their lobbyist reports (other than the status update on bills). You might recall that the contract calls for regular updates on City priorities and what they are working on. They could call in at Council meeting or just provide written reports.
7. Energy Efficiency: Work continues to take place on this project now that the Council has approved both a project budget and a contract. We are reevaluating one of the project items (high mast lights) based upon new information we received. If we make any changes, it would simply mean that this item was delayed or placed on hold and less money would be spent than authorized.
8. TORA Agreements: Work is proceeding on all three of the TORA Agreements we discussed at the last meeting. We hope to have the one regarding Spit parking back before you soon.
9. Staff Training: The City will be providing training this week to employees who have daily contact with the public. The focus is on how to deal with difficult, angry, emotional, harassing, or unstable citizens and customers. This occurs more than you might think. The training will be geared toward providing professional and helpful responses without aggravating the situation or causing it to

- deteriorate. Training will also be provided on coping skills and how to avoid letting abusive and harassing clients affect your work, attitude, or state of mind.
10. Water and Sewer Rate Setting: As you know, the Council has decided to start working on water and sewer rates at a workshop before the first meeting in April. I think we will start out with a refresher on how rates are set now so everyone is on the same page. The letter below from the Department of Commerce reminded me that there are resources out there which could assist with this process if Council wishes. As a reminder, the Department reviewed the City methods and rate structure several years ago and determined that it was very good. A University study reached the same conclusion. Regina also attended some training this year on utility rate structuring and came back thinking that the City is in line with recommended practices.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting
2. Letter from Department of Commerce re: various types of training Assistance
3. Letter from DOT/PF re: Work on Lake Street