

MANAGERS REPORT
August 8, 2011

TO: MAYOR HORNADAY / HOMER CITY COUNCIL

FROM: WALT WREDE

UPDATES / FOLLOW-UP

1. Narrow Band Radios: This agenda contains an ordinance that would appropriate \$24,510.24 from the Public Works depreciation account to purchase “narrow band” radios for the department. The FCC has mandated that all two way radios be operated on narrow band frequencies by January 1, 2013. Radios that are not narrow band capable must be taken out of service at that time. The Borough Office of Emergency Management is providing funding and technical assistance to public safety departments throughout the Borough to assist in meeting this mandate. HPD and HVFD are participating but PW is not eligible. The conversion to narrow band communications is happening with the public safety agencies on September 1 of this year, less than a month from now. This is well in advance of the deadline. Unfortunately, once that occurs, PW will no longer be able to communicate with HPD and HVFD except by cell phone. This is not good for a variety of reasons. The Public Works Department would be one of the most important first responders we have in an emergency or disaster situation. The fact that they would be unable to communicate with HPD and HVFD is unacceptable. Cell phone service could be easily interrupted and so could the power and land lines. It is important to get new radios for PW ASAP. The department will have to convert anyway by January 1, 2013. That would make this an appropriation next year, in the FY 2012 budget. For public safety reasons, I believe we should do it now. ProComm has the contract to provide radios and product servicing to all of the public safety departments in the Borough for narrow band. In order to provide efficiency and insure interoperability, I recommend that purchase the equipment from the same company.
2. Health Insurance: The next meeting of the Borough Task Force on Health Care Costs is scheduled for August 15. The primary agenda item is getting into more of the details of various health insurance plans, beyond just the cost per employee. Andrea will attend this meeting. So far, the group has not progressed too far into the larger issue which is a discussion about what we might do collectively to help keep health care costs down for all.
3. Coast Guard Parking Improvements: This agenda contains an ordinance appropriating money from the P&H Reserves to make parking improvements at the Coast Guard staff parking area adjacent to the Pioneer Dock. These improvements are part of the broader agreement between the City, AMHS, and USCG to reduce potential conflicts between user groups on Lot 45 A and to maximize convenience and operating capacity for these two very important clients. The City’s lease with the Coast Guard provides for 25 parking spaces. The old land use agreement with AMHS made all of Lot 45 A available for ferry staging and related activities. This has worked fine for a decade. The need for change from the status quo is driven primarily by the fact that

the ferry Tustemena is now home ported here and the ferry Matanuska is visiting frequently as well. This means more ferry traffic and a greater need for staging at the ferry staging area. As a result AMHS wanted to build a warehouse on Lot 45-A, causing further congestion. You will recall that the agreement includes AMHS giving up any claim to use the Coast Guard parking area on Lot 45 A in exchange for a lease on Lot 48 to be used for the warehouse, staging, and long term employee parking (the new approved lease). AMHS agreed to pave the road to the warehouse. The City agreed to consolidate USCG parking and make a clear delineation between the parking area and the ferry staging area. The funds authorized by this ordinance would remove an existing fence, install barriers between the USCG parking area and the ferry staging area, move the parking area slightly to the west partially onto Lot 20 (also leased to the Coast Guard), construct an access ramp from Lot 20 to the trestle area, and bringing in fill material and compactable material to accomplish the above. This would complete the City's part of the agreement between the parties.

4. Library Landscaping: Based upon the letters you received from the LAB and the "Friends" and the general reaction I have received from the Council and the public, I have decided to go ahead and get an estimate from the mowing contractor on how much it would cost to expand the mowing on the library grounds for the remainder of this year. I will look for money in the existing budget to do that. Volunteer work parties will be assembled to work on weeds in the gardens and the alders. Depending upon where Council wants to go with this, additional funding for mowing and seasonal staff may have to be added for next year's budget.
5. Employee Committee: An Employee Committee has been formed and its first meeting will be on August 4th. Andrea Peterson, Regina Mauras, and I will provide staff support and get the Committee the budget and benefit information it needs. My intent is to provide information and facilitation functions only and I will not attempt to guide the employees in any particular direction. The Committee members have been told that their charge will be to disseminate information and solicit input from co-workers and to represent all City employees. They have also been told that they will have direct access to and a dialog with the Council.
6. Tsunami Warning System: Another meeting about the Tsunami warning system was held at the Borough EOC in Soldotna on July 28. Chief Robl attended in person and Chief Painter, Bryan Hawkins and I participated by teleconference. The meeting was purposely held after the City Council considered the 'Opt-Out' resolution. There were many things on the agenda and the meeting lasted approximately three hours. One of the main discussion points was how to move ahead now that Seward, Homer, and Seldovia have all "opted-out." On another front, Chief Painter is researching the possibility of the City establishing its own tsunami warning radio transmitter. This signal would be limited in geographic area and would be similar to the radio messages you can currently get about road conditions or the Whittier tunnel. So for example, when the tsunami warning siren went off, people would be told to tune into AM 88.8 or something like that instead of "tune in to your local radio station". This would allow us to provide locally relevant information and could solve the problem associated with the fact the local stations do not have staff on-site during the evening hours.

7. Old Wooden Dock: In the last report, I mentioned that Petro Marine is currently moving its fuel lines off of the Old Wooden Dock and onto the Pioneer Dock. This is something we have been working on since the Pioneer Dock was constructed. What I forgot to mention was probably the most important piece of the story. After the fuel lines are removed from the old dock, we hope to demolish it because it is a safety hazard and liability. Expect to see a proposal to do this coming your way sometime soon.
8. L.A.W Publications: Attached is a letter from Chief Robl to local businesses. Homer, Kenai, Soldotna, and Seward are all working with L.A.W. Publications which provides excellent educational material about the prevention of substance use and criminal activity. The organization is supported by donations from local businesses and professional organizations. They would like to introduce themselves in Homer and this is Marks's introductory letter.
9. Budget Process: Well, if you needed any more clues that summer is almost over, here is the clincher. The budget process has begun. The Finance Department is preparing the initial data and worksheets for the department heads to work on. As you know, this is a long and fun process. By the time Council approves the budget for next year, there will be snow on the ground and all of your Christmas presents will be wrapped!

ATTACHMENTS

1. May and June Department Statistics
2. Letter From Chief Robl to Local Businesses and Professional Establishments