



City of Homer

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MANAGER'S REPORT

August 25, 2014

TO: MAYOR WYTHE / HOMER CITY COUNCIL

FROM: WALT WREDE

UPDATES / FOLLOW-UP

NOTE: Some of these items appeared in the last report. I have updated them and brought them back in case the Council wanted to discuss.

1. Ocean Drive Paving and Striping: At the last meeting, Sean Baski, DOT/PF Project Manager, made a presentation on the Ocean Drive repaving job. The emphasis was on proposed improvements targeting pedestrian and biker safety. Sean stayed for the entire meeting and took notes on the comments provided by the Council and those public members who testified. Several days later, after consulting with his colleagues at DOT/PF, Sean called me to provide answers and responses. Following is a summary of those responses:
 - Shoulder Maintenance: Several members of the public who testified said that safety for bikers would be improved if the shoulders were swept and the edges maintained. The response is that DOT/PF maintenance staff is aware of this and they do the best they can. They have other much higher maintenance priorities and like the City, they are faced with staffing and budget constraints.
 - Shoulder Extension on Causeway: During the public comments, it was suggested that the shoulder on the North side of the road should be extended across the causeway to make an easy connection with the trail that begins near McDonalds. The response is that expanding the paved footprint is not part of the project and cannot be funded under the repaving program. Sean also noted that doing that would likely require widening the causeway as much as 8 feet into the lake and replacing the outfall pipes. This would be very expensive. If the City wanted to pursue this idea further, it could consider nominating it for a STIP project or making a capital request to the Legislature.
 - Sidewalks: Several people inquired about separated sidewalks, perhaps elevated with curbs and gutters. Again, this goes beyond the scope of the project and could not be funded under the current program. The STIP Program, the HSIP Program, and CIP requests to the Legislature are some of the funding possibilities. DOT/PF would also be open to the City funding that improvement itself however, under the current program rules, HART Funds cannot be used on a State Road. Sean cited engineering and design considerations that

would have to be addressed including drainage in a very flat area and restricting driveway access for local businesses to defined ingress and egress points. We agreed that some business owners might object to that but it would definitely improve safety overall, for everyone, including motorists.

- Crosswalk: In response to comments by both the Council and the public, the crosswalk has been moved from Lake Street at the curve to Lampert Lane.
- Public Input: Several people commented that it was unfortunate that the public only had the opportunity to comment now, when the project is already underway. Sean said that this project, because it was a simple repaving project, did not follow the normal nomination process. Repaving projects are nominated by DOT/PF maintenance personnel and once the projects are nominated, there is a short window for construction and pressure to get these jobs under contract and out the door quickly. Repaving jobs are basically maintenance and do not have the long lead times for planning, engineering, scoping that other construction projects have. What made this repaving project a little different was the proposed safety improvements. Even though this was a compressed timeframe, DOT/PF had an open house and a comment period, and it worked closely with City staff members. I told Sean that I felt bad that the City administration did not bring the work on Ocean Drive to the attention of the Council sooner. The proposed changes seemed logical and good to the staff (the shoulders more so than the crosswalk locations) and there appeared to be support from user groups.
- Diagonal Striping / Bold Striping at Outer Edge of Driving Lane: Demarcation of the shoulders was mentioned several times. Diagonal striping in the shoulder area and bolder, wider striping at the outer edge of the drive lane was suggested. Sean referred to the engineering and design manuals and standards that he had to comply with. There are nationwide standards that apply to diagonal striping and 8 inch striping. Those tools are used in specific situations and to use them here would be inappropriate. The driving public benefits from standardization and they should have certain expectations when they see specific things, like diagonal stripes. Diagonal stripes are used to visually separate driving lanes from bike lanes. They are five feet wide. If you did that here, you would be left with only one foot and bike lane.
- Safety Generally: There was a lot of discussion about the fact that drivers don't respect crosswalks in Homer. The crosswalks on the Sterling Highway received particular attention. Sean pointed out that pedestrian and bike safety at crosswalks is dependent upon three equally important things, engineering, enforcement, and education. DOT/PF is primarily responsible for the engineering component of that formula. Enforcement and education requires a concerted effort and commitment by the community. DOT/PF has an active education campaign via the Alaska Highway Safety Office which targets programs where they get the most "bang for the buck" in saving lives and preventing injuries. Sean noted that the new traffic signal soon to be constructed at the intersection of Main Street and the Sterling Highway should help because it will slow drivers down and provide breaks in the traffic.
- Flashing Signs / Push Button Signs at Crosswalks: It was suggested that flashing or push button crosswalk signs be installed. Sean's response is the state's regional traffic engineer is currently drafting criteria and guidelines for their use in Alaska. There would have to be certain traffic studies and triggers to be met before they would be used. Sean suggested that after studies are completed, the HSIP program might be a source of construction funds and

that if this was a priority for the Council, it should inform the Regional Planner and Regional Traffic Engineer.

2. 2017 Board of Fish meetings: On October 17 and 18, the Board of Fisheries will hold a workshop in Juneau. One of the things on the Board's Agenda is scheduling the 2017 Upper Cook Inlet Board meetings. The Board has a tendency to want to have these meetings in Anchorage. It would not surprise me if Mat-Su representatives push to have the meetings up there. The Kenai Peninsula Borough and the Cities of Kenai, Soldotna, Seward, and Homer have been talking internally about a joint resolution requesting that the meetings be held on the Kenai Peninsula. The City of Kenai attorney is currently working on a resolution. One discussion we are having is whether to offer a specific location possible location in each community or just keep it general, anywhere on the Peninsula. You can expect to see this resolution on the September 8th agenda. Let me know if you would like to discuss further.
3. Natural Gas Update: At the July 28th meeting I provided the Council with a Gas Distribution System Report. I would like to provide an update on that report. First, the contract. The City signed a "not to exceed" contract with Enstar in the amount of \$12,160,632. The bulk of the distribution system work was essentially complete by the end of July. We recently paid the July invoice and so far, the City has paid a cumulative total of \$11,657,047. Some limited work has continued into August and additional costs to be reimbursed are anticipated. At the end of August we should have a much more definitive picture of where we are. Second, the Report I provided on July 28 contained a section called Next Steps which included tasks and target completion dates. Based upon further consultation with Enstar, City staff, and the City Attorney, I would like to amend the target completion dates. The new target completion dates are:

<u>Task</u>	<u>Target Completion Date</u>
Calculate Final Project Costs	September 30, 2014
Reconcile Properties Served	September 30, 2014
Recommendation / Council Action/Condo Assessments	October 13, 2014
Recommendation / Council Action / Free Main Allowance	October 13, 2014
Set Up / Test New SAD Software	October 30, 2014
Final Assessment Roll Introduced (HCC 17.04.070)	January 12, 2015
Assessment Roll Approval Process (HCC 17.04.070-090)	January-March 2015
Assessments Mailed to Property Owners	March-April 2015

4. Strategic Planning: Attached is a memorandum from Katie Koester regarding strategic planning. A consultant has been selected by the review team. Due to timing concerns, we need to notify the consultant as soon as possible in order to make the selected date work. We need to move

fast but we have some associated issues we need to discuss including budget/appropriation and contract award, etc.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Memorandum 14-129 from Community and Economic Development Coordinator, Re: Strategic Implementation Planning.
2. Memorandum 14-130 from Port Director/Harbormaster, Re: Harbor Improvements Construction Schedule.