



Homer Update:

During the legislative session, representatives from the City of Homer met with a variety of legislators to discuss the City of Homer's legislative capital projects. Participating in these meetings at various times were Rob Dumouchel, Bryan Hawkins, and Jennifer Carroll, who presented on behalf of the City of Homer, and Reggie Joule and Christine Hess. The designated Homer representatives have met with members of both the Senate and House Finance Committees, who help craft the capital budget and any general obligation bond packages, as well as legislative leadership and their local representatives. The team met with the following Alaska State legislative members or their staff:

- Rep. Merrick, who is the Co-chair of Finance. She is in charge of the capital budget on the House side.
- Rep. Lebon, who serves on the Finance Committee, which oversees all budgets. Members look to him for guidance on finance issues.
- Rep. Stutes is the Speaker of the House and represents the Kodiak area. She has a firm grasp of fisheries and the need for maritime infrastructure. As Speaker of the House she is intricately involved in close-out negotiations.
- Rep. Vance represents the Homer area and serves in the minority.
- Rep. Carpenter represents the Kenai Peninsula Borough and serves in the minority. He serves on the Finance Committee, which oversees all budgets.
- Rep. Ortiz represents Ketchikan and is unaffiliated, but caucuses with the majority coalition. He is Vice-Chair of the House Finance Committee and assists with budgets.
- Rep. Tarr is from Anchorage and is a member of the House majority. She currently chairs the Fisheries Committee. She is the 21st member of the caucus.
- Senator Micciche is the Senate President and represents the Kenai Peninsula. As Senate President he is a key negotiator on the close-out package.
- Senator Stevens is the local representative. He is also the Rules Chair.
- Senator Bishop is the Co-chair of Senate Finance and is in charge of the capital budget on the Senate side. He would also be involved in any G.O. Bond package.
- Senator Begich, who is the minority leader.
- Senator Hughes, who is the majority leader.

The main focus of these meetings was the Homer port expansion project and a majority of time was spent overviewing the project, its benefits to the State of Alaska and the economy, and the cost. Due to the capitol building being closed to the public, all meetings were conducted by Zoom and lasted about 30 minutes. We are hoping that meetings can be in person next legislative session.

J&H Consulting worked with Homer's team during these meetings. Bryan Hawkins prepared a slide show that focused on the port project. Working together, the presentation was updated and rehearsed before meeting with representatives. Throughout the session, J&H Consulting continued to check in and work with Senators Stevens

and Bishop about the Homer port and possible funding opportunities that included the capital budget, G.O. bonds and federal funding. We also worked with these offices on the reappropriations of funds for the new fire cart. Additionally, J&H Consulting conducted follow-up with offices that had questions about the port project.

Working with Jennifer Carroll, the City of Homer's capital projects were also entered into the state capital appropriation tracking systems. Projects cannot be funded if they are not in the legislative system, and it's important to ensure that projects are being tracked. Homer's top five projects were entered into the system.

In early March, the Homer delegation had the opportunity to meet virtually with Senator Murkowski and her staff. Later, the Homer delegation met with Senator Sullivan. Both meetings lasted well over 30 minutes. Homer gave a detailed presentation about Homer's port expansion project and other capital needs. Senator Murkowski had a U.S. Coast Guard intern staffer assist the City of Homer with the Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Coast Guard. Senator Murkowski's office did outreach to the Army Corps of Engineers and informed us that the Homer port expansion did not get funded in the FY 2022 workplan. There were only a small number of General Investigation new starts allowed nationwide in the bill last year, and Alaska did not receive any of the funding. We were assured that Senator Murkowski and Sullivan will continue to submit the project at every possible funding opportunity, including the FY 2023 workplan. They also did not recommend any changes to the submission to the Army Corps, as the project fits well within the Corps' authorities. Senators Murkowski and Sullivan both provided assurances that they would continue to work with the Army Corps of Engineers about restarting the required general investigative study for the port expansion. J&H Consulting continues to touch base with the federal delegation and tactfully remind them of the Homer project. On August 16th we received the following update from Senator Murkowski's USCG intern, Abbie Lyons:

This study is on USACE's docket and is a priority for our office. It is not set in the 2022 budget, yet. Our office remains optimistic that the Bipartisan Infrastructure Framework, which recently passed in the Senate, will pass in the House. If that happens, funds should become available for quite a few USACE projects in Alaska. The House is anticipated to vote on it when they return from their state work period. I'll be sure to keep you apprised of any updates we get. Senator Murkowski has worked hard to get these funds to our state, and we know how important an expansion in Homer is for the town, tourism, and fishing industry.

J&H Consulting will continue to work with the federal delegation on the Homer port. The Homer port expansion project has been very well received both at the state and federal level and both the federal delegation and the local state representatives showed strong support for the port expansion. J&H Consulting is also working with the USCG to arrange a meeting for newly-installed Rear Admiral Moore to meet city representatives, tour the Homer port, and discuss the USCG's future plans in the area and their needs. A meeting had been set up for August 18th, but unfortunately it was postponed.

Later, we had a meeting with Senator Murkowski's staff to discuss the City of Homer's Raw Water Transmission Main (RWTM) project, which was ranked for funding under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (FEMA-4413-DR-AK-HMGP-0011R), or any possible waivers available for this project. We requested any information on possible waivers of some requirements and updates about the timing of any technical assistance on an All Hazards Mitigation plan. The technical assistance portions of the Hazard Mitigation Plan have started to move forward and a staff member from the Department of Military Affairs has been assigned to the project. As requested, J&H Consulting will help as needed to push funding forward for this project.

J&H Consulting also worked with Homer staff to prepare for possible federal funding for projects in a variety of areas including tourism, parks, public restrooms, water and sewer, clean energy, and large and small capital projects in addition to the port expansion. Working with Jennifer Carroll, short summaries on several capital projects were written up and distributed at both the state and federal level. J&H Consulting also met with the

Public Works Department and discussed upcoming water and sewer projects. We encouraged inputting additional projects into the state system in anticipation of additional federal water and sewer funding being available. With the possibility of a large federal infrastructure package passing that may contain significant funding for projects around the country, we wanted our delegation to be ready to advance Homer's projects and for all projects to already be in the required databases once funding becomes available.

J&H Consulting worked with city staff to draft several letters and resolutions, which were passed by the city council, and forwarded to the appropriate state representatives. One letter and resolution addressed the proposed closure of the Homer DMV and other proposed budget reductions that negatively impact the City of Homer. J&H followed up with Senators Stevens, Bishop, Hoffman, Hughes, and Kiehl about the proposed DMV closure. J&H also worked with other impacted communities and organizations, who also sent letters and called their legislators urging them to fund the DMV offices. Working together, we exerted significant pressure on the proposed closures and in the end the Homer DMV was funded. An additional letter supporting the extension of a disaster declaration was also approved by the Homer City Council and was distributed to state officials. Eventually, the disaster declaration was passed. Other items that we worked on for the City of Homer included the following:

- Assisted in securing Community Assistance partial funding
- Assisted in securing funding for the municipal harbor grant program at \$14.4 million (Gov. veto to \$7 million)
- Reappropriation of \$35,000 in unused funds for a Homer port fire cart by working with Senator Stevens' office
- Provided reporting information on airport complaints
- Advancing FEMA raw water and sewer transmission project
- Raised awareness of the Homer Port expansion project at both the state and federal level
- Provided notice of grant opportunities, including broadband, parks and trails. Jennifer Carroll applied for one of the available parks grants and the project was recommended by ORTAB (Outdoor Recreational Trails Advisory Board) for funding by NPS; a final funding decision is still pending
- Provided written reports and updates throughout the legislative session on both state and federal issues
- Had Zoom meetings with Homer staff to strategize and plan on advancing Homer's priorities
- Assisted in drafting and providing edits on letters, resolutions, and capital projects

Although the legislative session has ended, work has been ongoing behind the scenes. Another special session is scheduled to start August 16th and it is likely that there could be another special session in late fall. If the \$1 trillion dollar infrastructure passes Congress, Alaska stands to gain millions in infrastructure funding. The City of Homer is in a good position to advocate for its fair share of the funding, including for the port expansion.

It has been our pleasure to work with the City of Homer and its employees this past year.

Chris and Reggie
J&H Consulting