



City of Homer

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Office of the City Manager

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Memorandum

TO: Mayor Castner and Homer City Council
FROM: Rob Dumouchel, City Manager
DATE: January 4, 2023
SUBJECT: City Manager's Report for January 9, 2023 Council Meeting



AMMA and AML Conference

I traveled to Anchorage the week of December 5th to participate in the Alaska Municipal Management Association (AMMA) and Alaska Municipal League (AML) conferences. During the AMMA conference I participated in a panel on Council/Manager relations, gave a presentation on regional networking for City Managers, and was elected Vice President of the organization. During the AML part of the conference, I officially took my seat on the AMLJIA Board of Trustees and attended a number of sessions on local government issues with a nexus to Homer. Joining me were Special Projects Coordinator Jenny Carroll; and Economic Development Manager and member of AML Cities of Opportunity cohort, Julie Engebretsen.

Teleconference with Governor Dunleavy

On November 30th, Mayor Castner, Harbor Commissioner Crisi Matthews, Port Director Bryan Hawkins, and Special Project Coordinator Jenny Carroll had a discussion with Governor Dunleavy regarding the Homer Port

Expansion. The Governor was very supportive of Homer and clearly understands how important our working waterfronts are to the entire State of Alaska. During our meeting he said, “I’ve got to build a State of Alaska for the next 50 years.” I found that sentiment exciting as Homer finds itself on the edge of a major comprehensive plan update and preparing for the transformative change that will come with the expansion of our port and harbor facilities.

Check-in With Representative Vance

Special Projects Coordinator Jenny Carroll and I met with Representative Vance to discuss City goals and the upcoming session in Juneau. We covered topics ranging from the City’s capital improvement needs to community jail funding and speeds on East End Road.

Homer is a StormReady Community

Homer renewed its National Weather Service StormReady Community Certification and its commitment to implement the infrastructure and systems needed to protect lives and property. Special Projects Coordinator Jenny Carroll and Associate Planner Bella Vaz worked with the National Weather Service to have Homer certified as StormReady, adding to our recent TsunamiReady certification. This program works to protect communities from the effects of severe weather through advanced planning, education and awareness. StormReady promotes hazard preparedness to improve public safety before, during and after weather-related emergencies. To be recognized as StormReady, a community must maintain a 24-hour warning point and support emergency operations center (EOC) operations; support ongoing education and outreach; support more than one way of receiving warnings and alerting the public; and develop a formal emergency operations plan and hold annual exercises. The recognition program is valid for four years and can be renewed.

Operational Budget Worksheets Distributed to Leadership Team

In line with our budget development schedule, the Finance Department has distributed budget worksheets to department/division leaders. Once we’ve gone through this internal part of the budget process, we should have a lot more to talk about with Council regarding vision for FY24/25.

Audit Progress

Auditors from BDO will be in Homer this week working with staff on our current audit.

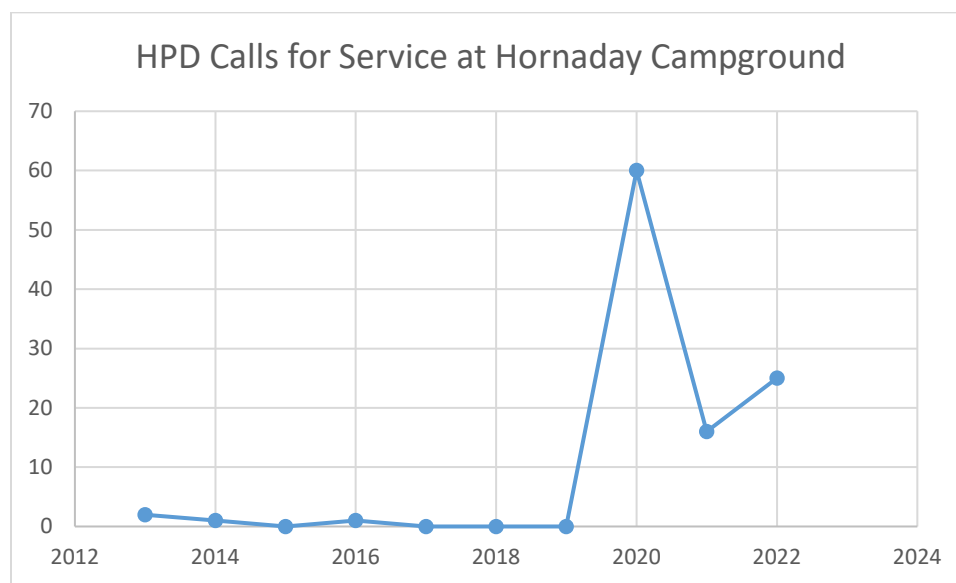
Homer Foundation Funding for Hornaday Park Playground Maintenance and Repair

Last year, the Homer Foundation reached out to my office to discuss ideas for the potential use of approximately \$20,000 in remaining funds from the Homer Playground Project and the Boat House Pavilion. We proposed putting the funds towards repair and replacements of certain pieces of equipment at Hornaday Park playground to include swings, diggers, slides, tire swings, etc. As costs have been volatile, we expect the cost of the project at the time of implementation to exceed the funds available from the Homer Foundation, so we will be asking for an appropriation at a future meeting to ensure we have sufficient funds to complete the upgrades.

Hornaday Park Summer Camping Closure and Master Plan Update

Like last year, I am using my authority under Homer City Code 19.08.030(d) to close all City-operated campgrounds for the winter. Winter camping has been problematic in years past and requires too much staff time to manage successfully. There have traditionally been private sector options for winter camping within City limits, and I expect that will continue to be true this year.

In 2023, I am not planning to re-open Karen Hornaday Park Campground. This is the least popular of our campgrounds, and it has been creating a significant amount of trouble for both the City and nearby residents. I am aware of numerous complaints from the public regarding perceptions of safety at the park. Those perceptions are backed up by the high volume of calls found in the Homer Police Department's (HPD) logs. Since 2020, 101 calls for service have been recorded by HPD at the park. The most common calls are for disturbances, suspicious circumstances, security checks, and welfare checks. HPD has also fielded calls for things like vandalism, harassment, assault, and drug activities. Multiple arrests have been made at the park over the last three years.



Activity at Hornaday Campground spiked in 2020 when it was designated as a free camping spot for those experiencing COVID symptoms. I discontinued the program in 2021, and the calls for service decreased. Unfortunately, calls remain very elevated compared to the very low number of complaints in the years before the free-camping program.

By suspending Hornaday Campground for 2023, it will give City staff a chance to break the cycle of abuse the campground has been facing. At the same time, we will be working with PARCAC on a Karen Hornaday Park Master Plan through which I would hope that we can figure out how we want to best use that space in the future. An improved camping program? A fitness trail with park exercise equipment? Some other yet to be determined use?



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FROM: Rob Dumouchel, City Manager
DATE: January 4, 2023
SUBJECT: 2022 Council Visioning Follow Up #3

Staff continues to work diligently to achieve 2022 Council visioning priorities. This is the third installment of what are intended to be roughly quarterly updates on project progress. It took a little bit of time to get up to speed, but we are now well underway. We're getting a lot of traction on various goals and hitting important check points – RFPs are being issued, grants are being applied for, and applications are being submitted.

- **Fiscal Policy Improvements** – Our project with JDO related to debt service found that we're in a good place for the most part, no observed violations of loan contract terms, but some potential improvements were identified by our legal team. This resulted, in part, in the introduction of Ordinance 22-48 which codified the HAWSP fund as a debt service fund that can also be used for water and sewer improvements (as allowed by the HAWSP manual). This ordinance was suggested and written by our attorneys at JDO. We have also successfully negotiated some contract updates with ADEC across the last few months for future agreements.

We continue to make progress on the procurement policy goal from 2020. The Finance Stakeholder Group has conducted research, including an internal survey, which has been forwarded to my office. Clerk/Deputy Administration Director Melissa Jacobsen has attended procurement training through the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and is working with the Finance Stakeholder Group on getting a draft ready for future consideration by the Council.

In mid-January, I have a finance term contract partner tentatively scheduled to come to Homer for an in-depth systems and workflow analysis.

- **Comprehensive Plan Fast Forward** – After hiring Special Project Coordinator Ryan Foster, we worked on getting the RFQ/RFP sketched out for a firm to help us complete this very large and complicated task. The draft went through review by staff and Councilmembers Aderhold and Davis before it was provided to Council in a Manager's report. We advertised an RFQ that netted us three firms which have been invited to provide a full RFP. We will be back in front of Council once that process is complete.
- **Zoning Code Modernization** – This item is split into two pieces, pre- and post-comprehensive plan. As a pre-comprehensive plan item, the West Hill rezone is complete (Ordinance 22-35). Additionally, the conditional use permit reform project was completed in October (Ordinance 22-68(A)). Ordinance 22-68(A) has been challenged in Superior Court and our legal team is addressing that

complaint. As for post-comprehensive plan zoning, we are including the zoning code in the comprehensive plan RFP for the most streamlined approach to getting this massive project completed.

- **Building Code Adoption and Implementation** – We submitted an application in late December for the BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities) Grant Program through FEMA as a possible source of funding to get our building program off the ground. The response to this application will have a large influence on how we proceed to the next steps. In the meantime, we're also working on permitting concepts for grading, dirt work, and burning which impact the same general stakeholders.
- **Housing Challenges** – The Special Projects Team, along with Economic Development Manager Julie Engebretsen completed a series of meetings about short term rentals with groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Commission, and City Council. As a follow up, this group is looking at hosting a housing workshop in late February/early March to talk about the bigger picture of housing in Homer. Related to STRs, there will be an ordinance introduced at the January 9th meeting to set aside funds for an STR tracking software solution.
- **Water and Sewer Expansion** – Public Works has been putting significant effort into the general concept of expanding our utilities for the last two years. Expect more detailed updates in the future as we work to secure funding for significant expansion opportunities.
- **Expansion of Sidewalks and Trails** – The Main Street sidewalk has been completed and the Master Transportation Plan is underway. In November, Council passed Ordinance 22-42(S-3) which creates new specifications for when new streets are required to provide for non-motorized transportation.
- **Emergency Preparedness and Training** – The All Hazards Plan has been completed and accepted by Council. Likewise, the tsunami brochure design project with UAF has been completed and printed copied distributed. There remains much work to do related to the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and future training opportunity development. I have staff actively looking for funding opportunities related emergency preparedness.
- **Public Safety Conversations** – The Volunteer Fire Department hosted an open house in October which brought the public inside the fire hall for a discussion about fire and EMS services here in Homer. The Homer Police Department has had success engaging the public with women's self-defense classes.
- **Volunteer Action Plan** – Special Project Coordinator David Parker was out front on this project collecting data, drafting reports, and building forms and databases for future volunteer programs. Due to the seasonal nature of some of our volunteer programs, we had a hard time getting as much access as we desired to staff during the summer. I am working on getting this effort back underway this winter and wrapped up before the end of the fiscal year.
- **Coast Guard City Designation** – The City's completed application was submitted by Assistant to the City Manager Christine Drais at the end of November 2022. We are waiting on word back from the Coast Guard as to the status of our application.
- **Harbor Float Replacements** – Council passed Ordinance 22-19(A) which made \$56,540 available from the Port Reserves Fund for grant and engineering assistance related to a harbor float

replacement project. While prep work will happen in calendar year 2022, it is likely that any grant submissions will occur in calendar year 2023.

- **Recreation Priorities and Planning** – While this is a bigger conversation than the HERC/Pioneer Gateway Redevelopment Project, much of the general recreation conversation is occurring in parallel to those work sessions/discussions. We did host a presentation by Community Recreation Manager Mike Illg on August 22 that covered the City’s recreational relationship with the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District.
- **Cybersecurity Improvements** – A key part of improving City cybersecurity is having sufficient staff to manage our digital infrastructure. Ordinance 22-20 provided funding for a Network Administrator position. That position was filled internally. A new IT Support Specialist joined the team in December. We also had turnover in the IT Manager position which has been refashioned into a Chief Technical Officer position. That recruitment is ongoing and final interviews are the week of January 9th.

2020 Highlights

- HERC Demolition – demolition of the smaller HERC building went out of bid after we completed one more report on the buildings (at the request of those firms bidding on the project). Expect to hear more soon.
- Stormwater Management Plan and Implementation – we have a grant pending to support the portions of the Kachemak “sponge” stormwater plan and one grant pending for portions of Beluga Slough stormwater treatment system; this is also a top item on the CIP and one we will lobby Juneau to support this year.
- Climate Action Plan – the CAP is intended to be integrated into the Comprehensive Plan which is currently out for RFP
- Wayfinding – Plan was adopted by Council, next steps will involve testing designs and installing prototypes around town
- Water and Sewer Policy
- Procurement Policy – Has been rolled into 2022 goal of financial policy improvements; nearing completion
- Reserve Funding; Election Code; Council Operating Manual; Funding for Large Vessel Harbor Study – Largely complete

2022 Council Priorities

Fiscal Policy Improvements					
Comprehensive Plan Fast Forward		Zoning Code Modernization		Building Code Adoption and Implementation	
Expansion of Sidewalks and Trails			Water and Sewer Expansion		
Housing Challenges			Emergency Preparedness and Training		
Public Safety Conversations	Volunteer Action Plan	Coast Guard City Designation	Harbor Float Replacements	Recreation Priorities and Planning	Cybersecurity Improvements

2020 Council Initiated Priorities

HERC Demolition/Community Recreation Center			Stormwater Management Plan and Implementation		
Climate Action Plan			Wayfinding/Streetscape		
Water and Sewer Policy	Reserve Funding (Water and Sewer)	Election Code	City Council Operating Manual	Procurement Policy	
Funding for Large Vessel Harbor Study					