



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: October 18, 2023
SUBJECT: City Manager's Report for October 23, 2023 Council Meeting

Sister City 40th Anniversary with Teshio, Japan is Next Year!

For 39 years, Homer has enjoyed a close sister-city relationship with Teshio, in Hokkaido, Japan. Numerous delegations have made the trip across the Pacific, students have participated in exchanges, and both communities have shared cultural connections and traded works of art created by local residents. Next year, in honor of the 40th anniversary, Teshio will again send a delegation to visit Homer. City staff and interested citizens have formed a stakeholder group to plan for their arrival and to come up with other ways of marking the occasion. The group has a wide range of ideas, from a temporary exhibit at the Pratt Museum to refurbishing a "pillar of friendship" to a performance of Japanese drumming. At a future meeting, I will have Library Director Dave Berry give a more detailed update on the 40th anniversary and seek Council feedback on how to proceed.

Sand Island Research Vessel Fire Response

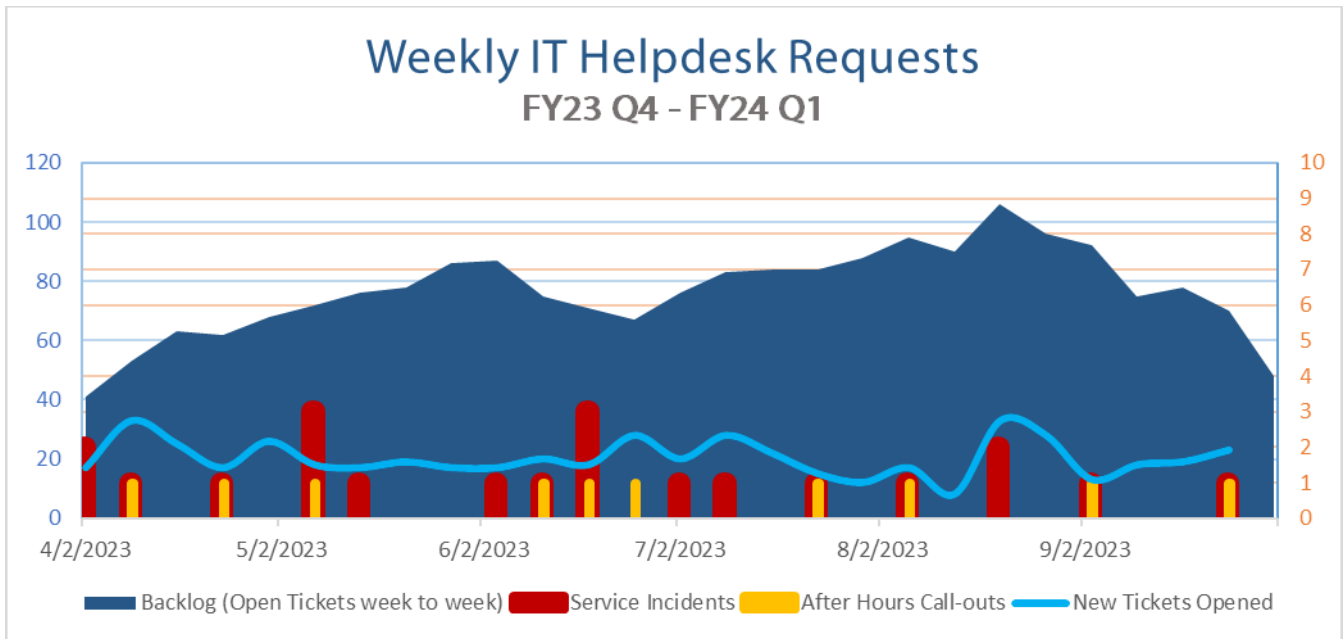
The Homer Volunteer Fire Department responded to a boat fire located at Ramp 8 in the harbor. Thanks to the vigilance of the Harbor's 24/7 operations crew, and the quick response by our firefighters, we were able to put out the fire before it was able to spread and create more significant damage. Attached to this report is an incident brief which gives an overview of the response and a window into what a boat fire response looks like from an operational perspective.

End of Season Trail Work Update

Public Works administration and the Parks Maintenance Division has been working very hard on trail improvements this year and is working with contractors to get as much work completed before the ground freezes. Attached to this report is a series of maps showing recent projects on the City's trail system.

IT Update

The Information Technology division has been putting a lot of effort into reformulating its mission, strategic priorities, processes, etc. to better meet the ever evolving needs of the organization and the threats to our systems. IT is shifting to a mission that is focused on: 1. Using data and technology to enhance the way City employees accomplish their work, and 2. Finding innovative ways of connecting the public to City government. To achieve that mission, IT has set cybersecurity, service management, and infrastructure reliability as their strategic priorities.



One massive step forward made by the IT team in the last year is the implementation of a help desk system which provides significantly better tracking of IT issues and service outcomes. The figure above shows an overview of help desk requests from April to the end of September. We’re also tracking and documenting incidents in a more comprehensive way. In the last six months, 50% of service outages and/or other incidents were associated with the phone system. IT was able to replace the aging system thanks to Council’s approval of Ordinance 23-38 and we are expecting the number of phone system related incidents to experience a sizable decrease.

Guiding Growth

Economic Development Manager Julie Engebretsen participated in a panel discussion presented by local group Guiding Growth. The panel focused on what is driving change in Homer. It included panelists from the Chamber of Commerce, South Peninsula Hospital, Story Real Estate, and the Center for Alaska Coastal Studies. The panel was held at the Homer Library and well attended by approximately 60 people. Common discussion themes were the aging demographics of Homer, the need to recruit and retain early- to mid-career workers, high housing costs for younger workers, and the allure of Homer for people relocating from the lower 48.

Parks & Recreation Department Update

Staff has been working hard on the tasks outlined in Resolution 23-047(S) which includes creating a 10-year plan for a department. A draft memo is scheduled to go before the Parks, Art, Recreation, and Culture Advisory Commission on October 19th. Staff is on track for a presentation to Council at the November 27th Council meeting.

Park Planning Updates

Economic Development staff participated in a community meeting hosted by Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships of the Southern Kenai Peninsula (MAPP-SKP) to discuss the results of the 2023 Community Health Needs Assessment which were presented to Council at their last meeting. There was a productive discussion and we see opportunities to use information from the MAPP-SKP plan in future City endeavors (i.e., Comprehensive Plan).

Corvus Design is scheduled to present at the October 19th Parks, Arts, Recreation, and Culture Advisory Commission with progress on the public meetings it hosted in Homer in September that were held to gather input on the futures of Bayview and Karen Hornaday Parks.

Homer Represented at 2023 Alaska Recreation and Parks Association Conference

Parks Maintenance Coordinator Chad Felice, Recreation Manager Mike Illg, and Parks & Trail Planner Matt Steffy represented Homer at this year's ARPA Conference in Wrangell. Mike presented educational sessions on Organizing Sports Leagues and Recreation Libraries, and Matt presented on Invisible Disabilities in Recreation Programming and Landscape Architecture as well as Conflict Resolution & Management. As an added bonus, I received numerous photos from the delegation via email of public restrooms. Wrangell uses a portable restroom system that can be tied into water and sewer which is significantly less expensive than a concrete structure, however, it is not at the same level of durability. There is a high probability that these units will be a future topic of discussion as we approach the mid-biennium budget adjust next year.

FY24/25 Budget Documents

The draft FY24/25 Budget PDF is being replaced on the City's website within the next week with an updated final version that contains additional materials required for Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) budget award consideration. This is the first budget cycle in which we've been subject to overhauled award standards and Finance Director Walton has put a lot of effort into getting our document in the right format and expanded with the right content to satisfy the new requirements.

Short Term Rental Update

I met with Planning and Economic Development staff to review a draft ordinance concept, it created some public safety questions that were addressed with Chief Kirko and Chief Robl. After submittal of this report, I will be meeting with Councilmembers Aderhold and Davis for inputs on the draft and guidance on various policy crossroads contained within this topic.

Kenai Peninsula City Manager Meet Up

City Managers on the Kenai Peninsula meet monthly online, but do our best to get together in person twice a year in spring and fall. This year's fall meeting was in Soldotna on October 13th. We largely discussed issues related to recruiting and retention with a focus on wage scales, non-wage compensation, retirement programs, etc. We also had an extended discussion on land use and bridging the gap between the development patterns many in the public desire and the ability (or inability) to create them within existing zoning codes.

Girl Scouts Democracy Event

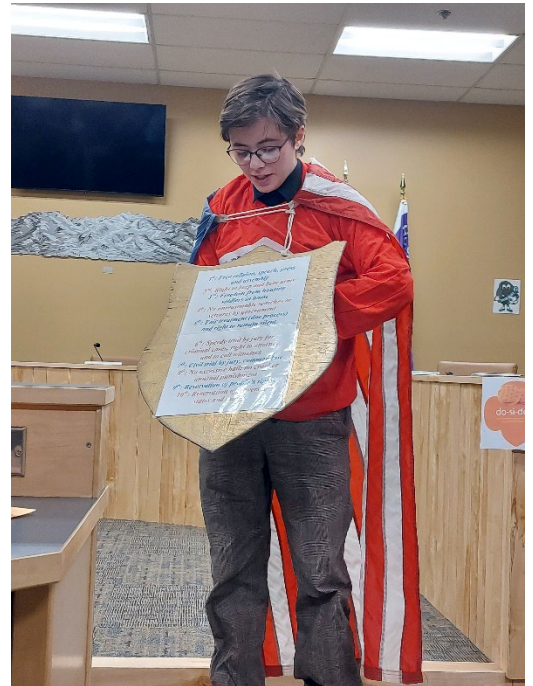
On October 13th the Girl Scouts held a Democracy Event in the Cowles Council Chambers. Ginny Espenshade lead the group through a Bill of Rights activity where they learned about the three branches of government. Guest speakers included Council Member Venuti and Jenny Martin, Staff to Senator Stevens who discussed the legislative branch, Mayor Castner and City Clerk Jacobsen who discussed the executive branch, and Judge Seifert and Ginny Espenshade who discussed the judicial branch. The Scouts held an election on the best Girl Scout cookie, and conducted a mock City Council meeting where they heard audience comments, staff reports, and voted on ranking for three capital improvement projects. It was a fun and educational afternoon for all



Mock Council Meeting



The Girl Scouts



The Bill of Rights

Photo credits Tina Seaton & Megumi Beams

Incident Brief:

Date: October 16, 2023

Dispatch as: Smoke investigation:

Location: ramp-8 in the Harbor

Vessel name: Sand Island

Vessel Type and use: a steel hull research/dive vessel

At 12:39 on Monday, 10/16/23 Homer Fire was toned out to respond to a smoke investigation on a boat in the Homer boat harbor. HVFD responded with Engine-2 and crew of 2, Tanker-1 with a crew of 2, medic-3 with crew of 2 and Chief Kirko and Deputy Chief Kahles.

While in route we were receiving condition reports from Harbor-2 (Glidden) stating that he could see light to moderate black smoke coming from vents on the upper deck. Glidden also stated that the hull was getting hot to the touch below deck indicating potential fire in the engine room or support space below the main deck.

By radio, I asked Glidden to confirm if all crew members were off the boat. He quickly confirmed that they were. I then asked him the size of the boat and if it was tied to the dock or outside of another boat. He confirmed it was tied directly to the dock.

At this time I requested mutual-aid from WES and KESA to respond with an engine and personnel for assistance.

At this time the Harbor crew was setting up the fire cart near the boat, running and water available on the arrival of E-2 crew.

Engine-2 arrived at approximately 12:49 and went to the boat to assess and report conditions to the incoming crews. Chief Kahles and Kirko arrived at approximately 12:51. Chief Kirko assumed incident command and assigned DC Kahles as operations chief at the boat. As incident command I remained at the top of the ramp coordinating incoming resources and assuring crew accountability and safety.

While DC Kahles was preparing the attack team for entry, 3 Coastguardsman approached him offering assistance. One of the crew was a command officer and the other two were geared up in fire PPE and available to assist in firefighting efforts. The initial attack team, HVFD staff, firefighters Knowles and Lowe made entry with a hand-line below deck to aggressively attack the fire. Heat and thick black smoke were present in the engine room greatly reducing visibility. Using a thermal imaging device they were able to see that there was no fire in the engine room and continued to move aft to locate the fire. They opened a hatch which lead to a diver support area which contained a hyperbaric chamber and dive equipment and supplies. Once they opened the hatch the heat and smoke became more intense and fire was visible below the chamber. They quickly brought the fire under control and reported conditions to Command personnel.

Tanker-1 crew arrived at approximately 12:55 and they were initially assigned to water supply operations and then to report to DC Kahles to assist the initial attack team.

The Tanker crew was assigned to assist with ventilation efforts to relieve smoke and heat from the boat so overhaul operations could resume.

When DC Kahles announced the fire under control, I canceled any additional responding units.

When overhaul was complete all fire suppression crews were released to put their equipment back in service.

Chief Kirko, DC Kahles and firefighter Knowles (fire investigation student) again went aboard to investigate the fire. The point of origin was determined and the cause is believed to be electrical in nature.

All HVFD units cleared the scene and returned all equipment and apparatus back in to a service ready status.



Beluga Slough Trail-ADA approaches were installed at each entry point



Charles Way-Installed with water/sewer by contractor



Day view Trail-brush hogged sides, done in house



Spruceview Trail-brush hogged both sides, done in house



East Fairview & West Fairview-redone with new fabric and material by contractor



Lee Drive Trail-installed with new fabric and material by contractor



Karen Hornaday Park-fabric and material on numerous walkways leading to the playground, done in house w/some volunteers

Aaron Yeaton and Chad Felice did some on-site work and recon, looking into the possibility of adding a hiking trail North of the campground



Ben Walters Trail-new fabric and material were installed, in house



North and South Calhoun Trail-North trail has new fabric and material, south trail brush hogged 2-3 each side, done in house

WORK SESSION

AGENDA CALENDAR 2023

Council Meeting Dates	4:00 p.m. Worksession Topic
<i>Monday, May 8</i>	
<i>Tuesday, May 22</i>	<i>Coast Guard ws 2 5 COW @ 4</i>
<i>Monday, June 12</i>	<i>2023 City of Homer Salary and Benefits Survey</i>
<i>Monday, June 26</i>	<i>FY24/25 Capital Budget</i>
<i>Monday, July 24</i>	<i>HDR-Homer Harbor Expansion Alternatives Screening and Next Steps</i>
<i>Monday, August 14</i>	<i>HERC & Hazardous Materials Update – Economic Development Manager & Recreation Manager</i>
<i>Monday, August 28</i>	<i>2024-2029 Capital Improvement Plan & FY25 Legislative Priorities - Special Projects & Communications Coordinator</i>
<i>Monday, September 11</i>	<i>HHE study funding and timeline status by the USACE Project Development Team</i>
<i>Monday, September 25</i>	<i>Ord 23-49 Amend Title 2 & Re-Organization</i>
<i>Monday, October 9</i>	<i>HERC – Economic Development Manager & Recreation Manager</i>
<i>Monday, October 18 (off cycle)</i>	<i>Joint Work Session with Planning Commission</i>
<i>Monday, October 23</i>	<i>Finance</i>
<i>Monday, November 13</i>	<i>Exempt Employee Wage Scale</i>
<i>Monday, November 27</i>	<i>Reso 23-027 Follow-Up Re: Recreation Funding Priority</i>