



City of Homer

www.cityofhomer-ak.gov

Office of the City Manager

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Memorandum

TO: Mayor Lord and Homer City Council
FROM: Melissa Jacobsen, City Manager
DATE: April 10, 2025
SUBJECT: City Manager's Report for April 14, 2025 Council Meeting

MAPP Community Meeting 3/21/25

On March 21st, MAPP held a community meeting to share progress on three locally identified priorities: attainable housing and improved communication on housing, food security, and childcare services. The City is one of many area agencies that comprise MAPP (Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships), a coalition dedicated to making the Southern Kenai Peninsula a better and healthier place to live. One exciting announcement was the unveiling of the 907 Navigation App, downloadable for free from your preferred app source. It was created by the Alaska Impact Alliance to assist Alaskans in navigating the state's unique landscape of public services, non-profits, and benefits. You can learn more at [907 Navigation App – Alaska Impact Alliance](#) or watch how to use it at <https://youtu.be/XNFUrfxNLXg>. It is very much designed by Alaskans for Alaskans, so users are encouraged to recommend websites of local resources to include.

907 Navigation

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Download the App

Discover the 907 Navigation app – your free guide to look up local resources, navigate complex systems, and check program eligibility in multiple languages!

Download on the Google play | Download on the App Store

www.alaskaimpactalliance.com

Comprehensive Plan and Title 21 Updates

The City continues to work closely with our partners at Agnew::Beck on the Comprehensive Plan update as we make progress towards getting feedback incorporated and the Public Hearing Draft ready for prime time. We've also welcomed our other partners at Stantec on board and have begun preliminary work on the Title 21 update. We remain conscious of costs for this contract and are staying on track with the established budget. Please see the attached schedules and stay involved!

Port Property Leasing Update

To enhance management and oversight of leases on City property, the City hired a part-time Port Property Associate, Mark Bowman. The current focus for the Port Property Associate is prioritizing Lease compliance. Standard lease actions (applications, assignments, etc.) continue to be processed, now aided by a new CRM system for improved efficiency. We are actively addressing Sublease compliance issues and reviewing Title 18 and the Base Lease to recommend adjustments to clarify and streamline management. An internal team

meets monthly to guide these efforts, and we look forward to updating the Port & Harbor Advisory Commission and City Council in May and June respectively.

KPB Tourism Industry Task Force

The Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) Assembly established a Tourism Industry Task Force that has been meeting regularly since December 2024 to evaluate the balance between positive and negative tourism-related impacts on KPB costs and services. The last meeting of the task force was April 10th, however the group was unable to reach a majority vote on the approval of their recommendations to the Assembly. Some members felt they needed more statistics and information to further develop the final report. There will be a request that the Assembly extend the term of the task force, and if approved, additional meetings will be scheduled. A copy of their current draft final report is attached.

Kachemak Peatlands NOAA Grant

City staff met with Katherine Schake and Willy Dunn, KBNERR, and Marie McCarty, KHLT, to discuss the Kachemak Peatlands grant. This was in response to learning that the KPB, through Aaron Hughes, has expressed interest in selling some of their properties, the Homer 8, being considered in this grant. This is following the adoption of Resolution 24-124(S) that acknowledged we aren't moving forward with the planning and construction of infrastructure at this time due to the high cost of the proposed design. The resolution does confirm the City's interest in continuing to acquire the properties in the peatlands. At the meeting we discussed ways to stay engaged with the KPB, and options for putting together a package to present to the KPB to still acquire properties in the Homer 8 and to negotiate for 2 privately owned parcels.

Diamond Creek Recreation Area Pedestrian Underpass

Staff met with folks from the Homer Trails Alliance (HTA) and Councilmembers Parsons and Aderhold for updates and conversation about the work being done towards a pedestrian underpass as part of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (AKDOT&PF) Sterling Highway rehabilitation project. The HTA has contracted with Happy Trails Consultants to develop a new proposal that provides a more direct path than what was originally developed in the City's contract with Kinney Engineering and Happy Trails. The new proposal uses a maintenance road that will be developed in the right-of-way as part of this project. The next step will be to engage with AKDOT&PF to get their support for using a portion of their right-of-way.

City Manager Meetings and Events:

- March 25th – met with citizen re: HVFD
- March 25-April 9 – Lobbyist RFP Review Committee meetings and proposer interviews
- April 2nd – S3 Workshield zoom meeting
- April 4th – J&H Consulting Lobbyist check-in
- April 9th – met with KBNERR, KHLT, and staff re: Kachemak Peatlands NOAA Grant check in
- April 10th – met with Homer Trails Alliance, Councilmembers Parson & Aderhold, and Staff re: Diamond Creek Recreation Area Pedestrian Underpass and KPB Tourism Working Group zoom meeting
- Completed AML Learning Hub Asset Management 101
- Ongoing weekly meetings with Departments, Mayor and Councilmembers, and City Attorney

Attachments:

- April Employee Anniversaries
- Memorandum re: Update on Federal Funding Changes
- Homer Comprehensive Plan Schedule
- Homer Title 21 Update Project Overview
- Cook Inlet Citizen Regional Advisory Council Report
- Small Business Development Center Quarterly Report



MEMORANDUM

Employee Anniversaries for April

Item Type: Informational Memorandum
Prepared For: Mayor Lord and City Council
Date: April 14, 2025
From: Andrea Browning, Personnel Director
Through: Melissa Jacobsen, City Manager

I would like to take the time to thank the following employees for the dedication, commitment and service they have provided the City and taxpayers of Homer over the years.

Joe Young	Public Works	18	Years
Rick Pitta	Police	16	Years
Jean Arno	Public Works	11	Years
Jaclyn Arndt	Fire	9	Years
Dave Berry	Library	6	Years
Ricky Borland	Port	6	Years
Aaron Yeaton	Public Works	6	Years
Will Kern	Public Works	4	Years
Hunter Dixon	PW	1	Year
Derek Haws	Fire	1	Year
Chelsea Marsh	Fire	1	Year



MEMORANDUM

Update on Federal Funding Changes

Item Type: Informational Memorandum
Prepared For: Mayor and City Council
Date: April 8, 2025
From: Jenny Carroll, Special Projects & Communications Coordinator
Through: Melissa Jacobsen, City Manager

Update on Federal Funding Changes

- **FY25 Federal Appropriation Request for A-Frame Water Transmission Main Project**

In March, Congress passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep the Federal government funded through September 2025. The CR excluded all Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS aka earmarks), which means that none of the projects that Senator Murkowski advanced in the Senate bills were ultimately enacted. Funding approved by the Appropriations Committee for the City's A-Frame Water Transmission Main Replacement project was not included in the final measure.

While disappointing, we knew this outcome was a distinct possibility as the Federal FY25 budget process unfolded – which is why staff resubmitted the project request for the FY26 review process. At this time, no formal timelines have been announced by the Appropriations Committee. The Senator's office said that all FY26 CDS requests will be reviewed as part of a fresh evaluation process, alongside new submissions. Prior inclusion in FY25 bills does not guarantee selection in this year's process.

- **Building Code BRIC Grant**

Due to the recently announced decision on April 4, 2025, by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure & Community (BRIC) Program has been shuttered and will no longer exist in its current form. As per the DHS/FEMA guidance all projects not yet awarded from FY2020, 2021, 2022 & 2023 will not be awarded.

Unfortunately, this includes the City of Homer BRIC award for developing building codes, as well as many other projects across Alaska. The State of Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management tells us that at this time there is no appeal process to save projects that have not yet been awarded. If there is a change in policy, or the creation of a new program that provides opportunities such as the ones in BRIC we will be notified. At this time, they have no further guidance on if a program like this will return in the future.

- **Raw Water Transmission Main Replacement Hazard Mitigation Funding**

No impact. All Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (Disaster-funded) projects nationally will continue. The project is ready to go out to bid as soon as FEMA finishes a review of and approves the bid package, which the City submitted on March 25, 2025.

- **FY25 BUILD (formerly RAISE) Grant for Non-motorized Transportation Planning and Design**

In response to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Directive to review all unobligated FHWA grants made in FY 2022 – FY 2025, staff worked with the Mayor to compose advocacy letters on behalf of the City's application.

On March 27, 2025, letters advocating for a renegotiated grant award were distributed to:

Senator Dan Sullivan and staff, Nick Alexander and Elaina Spraker
Senator Lisa Murkowski and staff, Tanya Lautaret, Dana Herndon and Logan Basner
George Mantis, Chief of the BUILD (formerly RAISE) Grant Program
Sean Duffy, Secretary US Department of Transportation
Steven Bradbury, Deputy Secretary US Department of Transportation

In response, Senator Sullivan's staff asked that the City complete a form his office had prepared to explain how the project benefits Alaska in alignment with Executive Order 14153. The Senator is collecting this information from affected grant recipients across Alaska to work on their behalf. Staff completed and submitted the form, and in coordination with the Mayor, composed letters to follow-up our renegotiation request in light of the current directive. These letters were distributed to the same recipient list as above, as well as Representative Nick Begich and his staff.

- **FY26 Community Project Funding (CPF) Request to Senator Nick Begich**

The House Appropriations Committee finalized CPF guidance for FY26 CPF (appropriations) requests and will open its electronic portal on April 14 where each member of the US House of Representatives has the opportunity to nominate up to 15 projects.

On April 2, 2025 staff submitted four CPF requests to the Representative, matching the CDS requests submitted to Senator Murkowski: (1) Homer Harbor Float Replacement Design & Permitting funds; (2) Funds to reauthorize US Army Corps of Engineers' work on the Homer Spit Revetment General Investigation; (3) A-Frame Water Transmission Line Replacement; and (4) Brush Attack Unit and Wildland-Urban Pumper Truck for Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Protection.

- **FY24 PIDP Float System Replacement Grant & FY25 PIDP Application Preparation**

City staff recently met with the Maritime Administration (MARAD) to discuss our unsuccessful FY24 Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) grant application for replacing Harbor Float Systems 4 and 1. Despite not being selected, we received encouraging feedback on our application's strengths and areas for improvement.

Application Performance

MARAD's review process is two-tiered. Tier 1 consists of initial eligibility and rating of merit criteria, some of which is statutory (written into law for the grant program) and some of which is discretionary (reflecting administrative priorities). Our application successfully passed the initial Tier 1 eligibility and technical review. The application additionally:

- Advanced through Tier 2 technical evaluation by subject matter experts
- Reached final discretionary consideration at the Secretary of Transportation's level
- Was not among the 31 projects ultimately selected for funding.

Key Feedback

The primary reason our application wasn't funded was risk assessment. Our project cost was identified as being on the high end of typical PIDP awards and no environmental had been completed which led to schedule risk.

Recommendations for Future Applications

The MARAD reviewer suggested dividing the project into smaller phases to reduce the total project cost. Phases could be funded across multiple PIDP or RAISE grant cycles.

Positive Outlook

The reviewer expressed optimism about our prospects in future grant rounds, noting that:

- The application scored well on statutory requirements
- The project aligns with current Administrative priorities
- We have a strong foundation for an FY25 application.

FY25 PIDP Application

The FY2025 PIDP Notice of Funding is posted, but has not yet been updated to reflect current administrative priorities. The statutory merit criteria will remain the same, and the previous discretionary merit criteria will be removed. We do not yet know what, if any, new criteria or rating structure will be part of the new grant instructions, or if there will be a meaningful extension of the April 30 grant deadline. Staff is beginning to work with consulting firm HDR to evaluate our position and whether to prepare a FY25 PIDP application. If we do, we plan to implement the reviewer's advice by focusing on a phased approach, prioritizing one float system to replace first based on statutory merit criteria, and a Resolution of support for the City's FY25 application would be presented to Council in the very near future.



Homer Comprehensive Plan Update Working Schedule to Finalize and Adopt the Plan

April 9, 2025

- **April 29th, 2025:** Conduct Planning Commission Work Session to share summary of public comments, proposed revisions, and discuss outstanding questions/changes.
- **Week of June 9th, 2025 (exact date TBD)** – Conduct Joint Work Session with Planning Commission and City Council to share and discuss Public Hearing Draft and confirm process for public release.
- **Week of June 16th, 2025 (exact date TBD)** – Post the Public Hearing Draft to the project website and conduct related outreach including email updates and communications with City Boards, Committees, and Commissions on Public Hearing Draft availability and adoption process with key dates.
- **July 16th, 2025:** Adoption process initiated with public hearing at Planning Commission regular meeting.
- **August 2025 (exact date TBD):** Aim to complete City Council adoption.
- **September 2025 (exact date TBD):** Plan goes to Borough Assembly for review and adoption.

City of Homer Title 21 Update

Project Overview

Updated April 2025



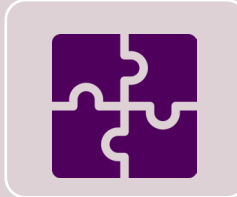




Project Purpose

The City of Homer is revising its zoning policies, found in [Title 21 of the City Code](#). Zoning code governs how land in a municipality is used and establishes rules on how properties function. Zoning is a tool to achieve the intent and future land use goals set by the comprehensive plan. A well-written code provides the Planning Commission and staff with tools to effectively regulate development, protect and enhance the community, and clearly communicate development processes and requirements to applicants, such as residents, builders, developers, and businesses.



Project Goals

				
Streamline development processes and increase predictability	Increase code clarity and flexibility	Better align the code with community plans	Consider natural hazards and preserve natural features	Simplify, reorganize, and add visuals to make the code more user friendly

Project Timeline

This project is Phase 2 of a two-phased community development effort. Phase 1 is the update to the City's Comprehensive Plan, currently being finalized. To learn more about the Homer Comprehensive Plan Update, visit homercompplanupdate.com.



Ongoing: Monthly updates and/or work sessions with the Planning Commission and City Council

How to Get Involved



Join meetings. We are sharing information and discussing the Title 21 process and related updates at upcoming City of Homer Planning Commission meetings. Visit the [project website](#) for details on dates, topics, and how to join.



Send comments. Submit a virtual comment card [here](#) to share your ideas.



Weigh in. This summer, the public will be invited to share your feedback on potential changes to Title 21.



Sign up. Visit the project website to sign up for project e-newsletters (approximately 4-5 emails between now and December 2025).



Contact the team. City Planner, Ryan Foster, rfoster@ci.homer.ak.us; Project Manager, Shelly Wade, shelly@agnewbeck.com.

Learn more about the project, including important dates, materials, and how to connect with the project team at

www.HomerT21CodeUpdate.com





Homer Title 21 Update

Progress Report to City Council

Prepared April 8, 2025

Accomplishments to Date

November 2025: Initial Introduction to City Council

February 2025: Staff Listening Session

- Met with City staff to discuss some of the challenges with the current code and what is working well. Also discussed desired future developments and examined specific topics such as conditional use permits, natural hazards, and sign code. This conversation built from an initial list of code issues, featuring input from the Homer Planning Commission and City staff.
- *Listening session held February 6, 2025; [agenda](#) and [notes](#) available on project website.*

March 2025: Planning Commission Kickoff Meeting

- Facilitated a discussion at a regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting to introduce the project team and share an overview of the schedule and tasks. Reviewed the Planning Commission's role and shared some examples from another community. Discussed top priorities for the code update.
- *Kickoff held March 5, 2025; meeting [minutes](#), [slides](#), and [recording](#) available on project website.*

April 2025: Summary Background

- This report summarizes relevant inputs into Homer's Title 21 Zoning Code Update. Input comes largely from the 2035 Comprehensive Plan Update Public Review Draft, including public input related to zoning, demographic data, goals, and strategies.
- *The Summary Background will be discussed at the April 16th, 2025 Title 21 Update Planning Commission Work Session.*

April 2025: Code Audit

- This audit of the existing code is an important starting point for the code revision process. The code audit summarizes input on key issues from staff and Planning Commission members, along with a technical code review by the consulting team. The code review addresses specific regulatory topics, first by summarizing the existing regulations, followed by considerations and recommendations to align the City's zoning/development standards. The audit identifies areas of the code that are: overly complex, redundant, and unclear; create barriers to housing; are onerous to permitting and approvals; are outdated as sound planning practices; or fail to achieve the outcomes the City wants to see as articulated in the draft comprehensive plan.
- *The Code Audit will be discussed at the April 16th, 2025 Title 21 Update Planning Commission Work Session.*

April 2025: Launch Website

Project website launched to the public: <https://homert21codeupdate.com/>

Upcoming Activities

- **April 16th: Planning Commission Work Session.** The project team will present key findings from the Summary Background and Code Audit, and related topics.
- **April 29-30th: Stakeholder Dialogues.** The project team is convening three dialogues to talk with Homer-area professionals that use/engage with the code (Title 21). This includes:
 - Builders and Developers
 - Business Owners
 - Realtors
- **April 30th: Community site tour.** The project team will drive around Homer with City staff to visit example areas where zoning policies resulted in positive outcomes, and areas of concern/tension.
- **May 21st: Planning Commission Meeting.** The project team will share an overview of April stakeholder engagement activities and guide a discussion around specific sections of the code.

Roles of the Planning Commission and City Council

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission is the advisory body for the Title 21 Update process.

Roles:

- Share guidance, feedback, and local knowledge during the code drafting process.
- Provide feedback on draft materials, including the draft code.
- Make a recommendation to the City Council regarding adoption the Title 21 Update.

City Council Engagement

- The project team will share periodic updates with the City Council, often via the City Manager's reports.
- City Council members are invited to stay informed about the process by attending Planning Commission meetings, reading project documents, participating in community activities, and reviewing the public review draft of the revised code.
- The City Council will be responsible for the adoption of the Title 21 Update.



Carla Stanley, representing the
City of Homer

Update from the Board of Directors

Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council

The Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council held its regular and annual meeting April 4th in Kenai.

Casey Sullivan, Manager of Government Affairs for Marathon Petroleum gave a presentation titled “Energy Matters to Alaska”. The company transports crude oil and refined products in Alaska. The presentation included a brief history of the Kenai refinery in Nikiski, which he says ranks near the top of the company’s operations in terms of safety and reliability, though changing market conditions are making the facility’s profitability more difficult. The refinery currently employs 280 people, and more than 100 associated contractors.

University of Alaska Fairbanks graduate student Sonia Kumar gave an update on her beluga whale studies, which have been funded in part by CIRCAC. The project uses acoustic monitoring techniques to gauge abundance of belugas and other species in the Kenai and Kasilof rivers. The gathered data in the rivers is analyzed as beluga positive minutes. No acoustic evidence of belugas was found in the Kasilof, despite traditional use of the species there. Sonia is working on a paper to try and explain this phenomenon. eDNA samples have also been taken, wherein water samples can be analyzed for DNA material and extrapolated to reflect species abundance. The eDNA studies produced data for king, silver, pink and sockeye salmon as well as eulachon, or hooligan. In the Kenai, belugas were detected during peak pink salmon runs, even though silver salmon make up the bulk of their diet according to earlier studies. The beluga population in Cook Inlet, last surveyed in 2021, showed marginal growth, potentially leveling off a decades-long decline.

We also received an update from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. Ytamar Rodriguez, ADEC Interagency Coordination Manager for the Spill Prevention and Response (SPAR) Program reported that the central region is fully staffed and has seen nearly full employee retention in Fiscal Year 2025. We learned that Deputy Commissioner Christina Carpenter will soon be appointed as Department Commissioner, following the departure of Emma Pokon, who has moved to the Environmental Protection Agency Region 10 (Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Tribal entities). ADEC has planned upcoming training with all staff in Anchorage for presentations on migrating Geographic Response Strategies (GRS) to Geographic Information Systems (GIS), a more readily accessible and dynamic platform for responders to use during a spill event. ADEC issued a permit for tanker transportation to the Don Young Port of Alaska in Anchorage for Bear Logistics on March 10th. The Department is also working on removing the Drift River Terminal on the west side of Cook Inlet from current GRS maps.

Caryn Smith is our Ex-Officio member representing the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. As Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oceanographer, she gave an update on proposed BOEM studies for Cook Inlet that are subject to available funding - two are bird studies for Lower Cook Inlet and another is for passive acoustic studies of Lower Cook Inlet. BOEM has so far lost one staffer in Alaska as a result of recent cuts to federal programs and agencies.

The April meeting also serves as our annual meeting, where we seat new and reelected Board and Committee members. Sean MacKenzie, representing the Municipality of Anchorage; Walt Sonen, representing the City of Seldovia; Robert Peterkin II, representing Tourism Interest Groups; Bob Flint, representing Recreation Interest Groups were all seated to the Council. We also recognized Council members for their years of service and our Volunteer of the Year:

Rob Lindsey (City of Kodiak) – 25 Years

Carla Stanley (City of Homer) – 20 Years

Michael Ophiem (Alaska Native Interest Groups) – 15 Years

Scott Arndt (Kodiak Island Borough) – 5 Years

Dr. Eric Klein (Environmental Monitoring Committee, public member) – 10 Years.

CIRCAC Volunteer of the Year – Scott Arndt

Our next meeting is scheduled for September 5th in Seldovia.



April 8, 2025

City of Homer
491 E. Pioneer Ave
Homer, AK 99603

Dear Homer Community,

This letter serves as our quarterly report for the period of January 1 to March 31, 2025. Homer Business Advisor Robert Green got the quarter off to a fast start, logging a couple of business starts and over a half million in capital infusion. Since then, things have quieted down as Robert has been out of the office on family medical leave. During the same quarter last year, Robert logged 182.6 hours with 46 clients, supporting 134 jobs, but those figures dropped significantly in his absence, with other advisors covering the Homer area remotely. This highlighted the importance of a business advisor located within the Homer business community, and we eagerly look forward to Robert returning next quarter. Here is a summary of deliverables to the Homer community during the quarter:

Client Hours: 101.1

Total Clients: 30

New Businesses Started or Bought: 2

Jobs Supported: 38

Capital Infusion: \$659,500

Client Surveys: 100% positive

The next section provides lists of the top advising topics and top industries obtaining technical assistance from the Alaska SBDC in Homer. This quarter, financing and capital overtook start-up assistance, while the list of the top five topics did not change. For industries, food services remained atop the list for a third consecutive quarter, followed by education and healthcare.

Topics

1. Financing/Capital: 47.6 hrs (47%)
2. Start-up Assistance: 20.4 hrs (20%)
3. General Management: 14.6 hrs (14%)
4. Buy/Sell Business: 8.8 hrs (9%)
5. Business Planning: 3.7 hrs (4%)

Industries

1. Food Services: 22.0 hrs (22%)
2. Educational Services: 21.7 hrs (21%)
3. Healthcare: 15.1 hrs (15%)
4. Accommodations: 11.0 hrs (11%)
5. Services: 8.3 hrs (8%)

We would like to thank the City of Homer for supporting the Homer Business Advisor position. We greatly appreciate the knowledge, experience, and consistency Robert Green brings to efforts in Homer. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Jon Bittner

Executive Director
Alaska SBDC