

Office of the City Manager

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Memorandum

TO: Mayor Wythe and Homer City Council

FROM: Katie Koester, City Manager

DATE: June 8, 2016

SUBJECT: City Manager's Report - June 13, 2016

Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network Destination Earns Homer Recognition

In July of 2015 Council passed Resolution 15-064 nominating some lands in the Beluga Slough Area to become part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network. Deputy Planner Julie Engebretsen and George Matz were instrumental in working with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission, USFWS and AK DFG in coordinating the nomination. Attached is a copy of the Anchorage Daily News article, the State's press release, and the certificate from WHSRN. Not only was the area of the network expanded, the Kachemak Bay site has now also been designated a site of international importance. Congrats for putting Homer on the map!

Homer Ranks as One of Top Small Towns for Wine Lovers

And speaking of maps...not only are we known for great birding, but we are known for our wine thanks to Bear Creek Winery. Top Value Reviews recently published an article online listing Homer as one of the top small towns in the U.S. for wine lovers. Just adds to the list of things to visit Homer for, though technically the winery is in Kachemak City.

Homer Library in National Spotlight (Again!)

Claudia Haines, Homer Youth Services Librarian, is quoted in a new book for librarians, "Inspired Collaboration: Ideas for Discovering and Applying your Potential" by Dorothy Stoltz and published by the American Library Association. Also a picture from our Children's library featuring Megan Murphy and daughter Olivine reading with Sevie, a trained companion dog.

Repairs to Load and Launch Ramp

During the extreme low tides that occurred in April it was reported to Harbor staff that there was a "drop off" at the end of lane 5 of the launch ramp. Staff was able to get a closer look at the bottom during those same tides and took photos of other issues of concern all along the bottom edge of the ramp in the transition between concrete and the rock runout. Port and Harbor Director Hawkins contacted the Engineers and Fish and Game (partners on the project) for an onsite meeting. Since then, a full underwater video survey was conducted and the contractor has been back to re-work these areas where the deficiencies were found. This work was conducted during the extreme tides at the latter part of May and again in June and will continue until the project is completed as designed and signed off by the engineers

and accepted by Fish and Game and the City. All lanes are open for use and the "holes" have been addressed.

From a contract standpoint, money has been held back from payment and there is a security bond in place that will not be released until our launch ramp project is completed as designed.

Award of ATAP Grant Could Delay Soundview Sidewalk Project

City of Homer has prepared a draft Alaska Transportation Alternatives Program (ATAP) grant application to fund Soundview sidewalk improvements. In consultation with AK DOT&PF, we have learned that some complexities of the Federal funding process could delay actual construction of the project (if funded) until next spring. The August 2016 date for the grant agreement originally published by AK DOT&PF could very well be pushed back due to DOT's right-of-way certification process and their requirement to approve project cost estimates. Even though the City will not be able to build the project this year if the grant is successfully awarded, it is still worth pursuing. The grant will cover approximately 70% of project cost which allows us to expand the scope of the project to bring the sidewalk all the way to the school in addition to saving some funds for other HART eligible projects. We should know by the end of July if we are going to receive the grant.

GSFA and EDA Grant

The City of Homer has been approached multiple times over the last 2 years by non-profit Global Sustainable Fisheries of Alaska (GSFA- also known as Ocean Rich Communities of Alaska) about leasing lots 9A and 10A near the Fish Dock to construct a training facility for modular flash freezing technology. GSFA plans to construct modular units for flash freezing fresh seafood using Cells Alive System, – or CAS – technology that preserves the freshness much longer than traditional methods. The units would be built on the Homer Spit and shipped to villages along the Alaska coastline for value added processing in rural Alaska. Employees would be trained on how to use the modular units at a facility on the Homer Spit. This project has great potential to provide jobs in Homer, for our rural neighbors, and change the way fresh seafood is preserved in Alaska. However, it also faces financial hurdles for startup funds which has stalled the project thus far and prevented them from submitting a complete lease application. GSFA has approached the U.S. Economic Development Association for a \$1.6 million grant to launch the project. As owners of the land, the City of Homer had to sign as a co-applicant on the EDA application. The application is contingent on a joint agreement that will come before Council at the next meeting detailing the City of Homer's responsibility which will be limited to owner of the land. It is important that the City not give special treatment to any leaseholder, regardless of the prospects of their project. The EDA will require GSFA to go through the proper channels before being awarding any grant, including review by the Port and Harbor Advisory Commission and approval by Council. If for any reason the Council does not award a lease to GSFA, the City would notify EDA and their grant application would be put on hold.

Reminder of Pioneer Avenue Upgrades

As a reminder, sod leveling continues in the right-of-way along Pioneer Avenue. Crews are trying to finish up this week so grass has time to take hold (you may have noticed hydro seeding of the completed sections). Over time the grass has grown above the curb resulting in a steep drop off between the grass and the pavement. This is a tripping hazard, unsightly, and gets in the way of snow removal equipment. Public Works is leveling those areas out and reseeding them, bringing in extra topsoil when needed. Where they are sloping, they will slope the grade so there is no steep drop off. Public works crews will also be removing, or moving back, obstructions in the first 18-24 inches of the right-of-way that hamper plowing and maintenance of Pioneer. This includes some dead stumps of mountain ash trees that have not fared well over the years and have nothing but a few scraggly shoots coming out of them. All live trees will remain.

Enc:

Maps/Press release/ADN article for WHSRN

Excerpt from online article "Small Towns for Wine Lovers"

Letter from Library Director to USDA inquiring about refinancing library loan

Excerpt from Inspired Collaboration: Ideas for Discovering and Applying your Potential

Draft letter to Kenai City Council in support of KPHI housing

Letter submitted to KPB Assembly on proposed Landfill Management Plan

Thank you note from Pratt

Homer Foundation Quarterly Report

Division of Wildlife Conservation Bruce Dale, DirectorHeadquarters

PO Box 115526 Juneau, AK 99811-5526



Alaska Department of Fish and Game Sam Cotten, Commissioner PO Box 115526 Juneau, AK 99811-5526 www.adfg.alaska.gov

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: May 12, 2016

CONTACT: Joe Meehan Statewide Program Coordinator Lands and Refuges Program (907) 267-2281 joe.meehan@alaska.gov

Kachemak Bay Wins Prestigious Western Hemisphere Shorebird Designation

(HOMER) – The designation is official and just in time for this year's annual Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival: The estuaries, shores, sloughs and tidal areas of Kachemak Bay are now officially part of the prestigious Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN).

WHSRN is a government-private partnership that designates important areas for shorebirds as a way to raise public awareness and promote scientific and conservation measures. Kachemak Bay now joins more than 90 network sites located in 14 countries throughout North and South America, including four other locations in Alaska.

Portions of Kachemak Bay – including Fox River Flats, Mud Bay and Mariner Park Lagoon – were named WHSRN sites in 1994. But as more information became available through monitoring and field studies, it became clear that Kachemak Bay in its entirety plays an import ecological role for shorebirds whose habitats span the Western Hemisphere. The new designation encompasses Kachemak Bay in its entirety, including both the inner and outer bay areas.

Kachemak Bay's designation within WHSRN was made possible through the cooperative efforts of the City of Homer, the Kachemak Bay Birders, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Kachemak Bay community, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. An official signing ceremony is scheduled for Saturday in Homer as part of the Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival.

Nearly 40 shorebird species have been observed in Kachemak Bay with many staging by the thousands during the spring migration. Other WHSRN sites in Alaska include the Copper River Delta, Kvichak Bay, Nushagak Bay, and the Yukon Delta.

Kachemak Bay's nomination and implementation into the WHSRN comes at no cost for the state. No regulatory or other enforceable requirements or oversight are associated with this designation.

For more information on the WHSRN program, visit http://www.whsrn.org/about-whsrn

The

WESTERN HEMISPHERE SHOREBIRD RESERVE NETWORK

hereby certifies that pursuant to the criteria established by the Hemispheric Council

Kachemak Bay

has been expanded and re-designated as a

~ SITE OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE ~ Approved by Council: May 2016

Catherine Hickey

WHSRN Hemispheric Council

WHSRN

WESTERN HEMISPHERE
SHOREBIRD RESERVE NETWORK

Rob P. Clay Director,

WHSRN Executive Office



Adventure (/section/adventure/)

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Value of Kachemak Bay to shorebirds gets a boost with designation

Author: Alaska News (/author/alaska-dispatch-news/)
 Updated: 5 days ago
 Published 5 days ago



Western Sandpipers feed along the surf line on the beach at Anchor Point during the Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival on Sunday, May 12, 2013.

The estuaries, shores, sloughs and tidal areas of Kachemak Bay have joined the prestigious Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (http://www.whsrn.org/), a partnership between the government and private enterprises that designates important shorebird areas in an effort to boost public awareness.

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There are 90 sites in 14 countries worldwide, including four others in Alaska — Copper River Delta, Kvichak Bay, Nushagak Bay and the Yukon Delta.

Twenty-two years ago, such Kachemak Bay sites as Fox River Flats, Mud Bay and Mariner Park Lagoon were added to the network. Over time, some scientists and birders came to believe the entire bay should receive the designation

"I think it's a big deal," said Joe Meehan of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. "It doesn't offer any new protections to anything. But it is part of an international effort to keep attention focused on shorebirds. The more the public realizes how important areas like Kachemak Bay are to shorebirds the better it is. It effects shorebirds that travel all the way from South America and Asia."

The city of Homer, Kachemak Bay Birders (http://kachemakbaybirders.org/), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Fish and Game supported the move. A ceremony will be held Saturday in Homer as part of the popular Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival (http://kachemakshorebird.org/), which celebrates the thousands of shorebirds returning each spring to Alaska and brings hundreds of birders to town.

Over the years, they've seen some 40 shorebird species in Kachemak Bay.

Fish and Game officials said there's no cost in joining the network — and no regulatory requirements. Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network officials based at the Manomet Bird Observatory in Plymouth, Massachusetts, decide which new areas to add to the network. Kachemak Bay Birders made the initial nomination with the concurrence of landowners.

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About the Author

Alaska News (/author/alaska-dispatch-news)

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29. Homer, Alaska



We know what you're thinking: wine tasting in Alaska? While most of the state is associated with harsh temperatures, other parts are more akin to the Pacific Northwest-like climate, and it is these areas that have slowly but surely been making a name for themselves among wine lovers. While some grapes are grown, most popular Alaskan wines are made with local fruits. Think berries, rhubarb, and other hardy fruits. There are currently only about 10 wineries in Alaska, so wine trails are unheard of here. Instead, head to Homer, home of the increasingly popular Bear Creek Winery. Bear Creek offers wine lovers a number of delicious berry-based wines made from blueberry, raspberry, cranberry, and strawberry, and even some made from a grape/berry blend.

Taken from: 30 Great Small Towns for Wine Lovers

http://www.topvaluereviews.net/features/small-towns-wine-lovers/



Homer Public Library

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May 26, 2016

Amy Milburn, Area Manager United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development 110 Trading Bay Road, Suite 160 Kenai, AK 99611-9115

Dear Ms. Milburn,

Thank you for taking the time to answer my questions about the USDA loan for the Homer Public Library, in particular, the possibility of refinancing to reduce our interest payments.

As you know, the State of Alaska is facing its most severe financial crisis of the past forty years. State budget cutbacks are impacting communities across Alaska, through significantly reduced municipal revenue sharing, elimination of state government offices and local employment, and reductions to social services, the university, and service contracts with local government (such as the Homer city jail). These cutbacks in state support are forcing the City of Homer to reduce its expenses, as well.

Additionally, cuts to the Alaska State Library are reducing services and increasing expenses for public libraries, including Homer's. Funding has been eliminated for database subscriptions that have until now been purchased by the State Library. These popular databases provide foreign language instruction, test preparation for major college and technical exams, teen health and wellness, and more.

Homer is a rural first-class city of just over 5,000 residents. City funding is largely dependent on seasonal sales taxes from tourism and fishing. Homer Public Library is supported almost entirely by the City of Homer, with no contribution from the Kenai Peninsula Borough and only minimal support of about \$6,500 annually from the State. Due to reductions in City revenues, the Library's non-personnel budget for FY 2016 was cut by 14%, largely achieved by a 43% reduction in the book budget and 16% cuts to both periodicals and audio-visual materials (audiobooks, music and DVDs). That \$24,500 represents the single largest category of reductions to our budget. Other expenses have been whittled down to bare-bones, are fixed costs, or cannot be reduced without cutting open hours and staff.

One of those fixed expenses is the USDA loan, which enabled Homer to build this wonderful, highly used, well-loved community facility. In 2016 we will pay \$99,824 on that loan, or 11% of our total budget. \$58,346 of that payment is for interest – more than twice the amount we lost this year for books and materials.

One way to look at the 2016 budget is that we severely reduced our ability to provide that most basic service of libraries – books and other media – in order to pay interest on this loan.

In August the City of Homer begins its budget cycle planning for fiscal year 2017. Forecasts are that finances will be even tighter than last year. The Homer Library has done everything possible to reduce its budget (including converting from oil heat to gas, which halved our heating bill) without reducing services. There is nothing left to cut but staff, which will mean eliminating jobs that help local families and reducing open hours to less than they have been in over a decade.

Besides the loss of jobs, reducing hours and service at this particular time would be especially problematic for several reasons.

- Use of Homer Library is rising continuously and significantly. Since 2005 (the last full year in the old library) through 2015, circulation of books and materials has increased by 58% and library attendance by 54%. Pre-school story time attendance rose by 109%.
- 2. Homer Public Library serves as an anchor institution for the underserved, many of whom will be especially hard hit by economic recession. These include seasonal workers, rural subsistence families, Russian Old Believers, Alaska Native individuals, the elderly, and people with disabilities ranging from mental to physical handicaps. Many people on limited incomes use the library for reading materials, DVDs, audiobooks, and computer access because they cannot afford to purchase these items. To my knowledge, we are the only library on the Kenai Peninsula offering Russian and bilingual materials to meet the needs of the Russian Old Believer community. We actively collect materials relevant to Alaska Native cultures, including indigenous language materials, as well as local history, subsistence, and sustainability topics.
- 3. As Alaska's economy contracts, the library becomes even more important to more people as they are impacted by job loss and cutbacks. It is well-documented that public library use rises when economies falter. Internet access is particularly important to unemployed people writing resumes and applying for jobs, students obtaining new job skills and taking proctored exams, and workers seeking job certifications, as well as people applying for government benefits and seeking medical, legal, or financial information.
- 4. The library serves as an economic incubator by providing entrepreneurial information (business, legal, tax, marketing) and tools (computers, printers, copiers, scanner, and Internet access), which community members use to start and operate small businesses.
- 5. Though the City of Homer funds the library, it functions as a regional library, serving rural residents of unincorporated and off-road communities who have no other option, or very limited options, for library service. Our patrons range as far north as Ninilchik, west across Kachemak Bay to Seldovia, Halibut Cove, and the Alutiiq village of Nanwalek, and south to the Russian Old Believer villages of Razdolna, Voznesenka, and Kachemak Selo. Most of these communities have no other option for library service, while a few have very limited libraries, primarily run by volunteers. For example, one family we serve drives 40 miles one way from Ninilchik to use the Homer library and participate in children's reading programs. It is over 80 miles from Homer to the next library of any size in Soldotna.

Homer Public Library is fulfilling the vision of the community when they committed to building a new facility. Residents wanted a vibrant, quality library so strongly that they voted to take on a building loan in the days before state construction grants for libraries were available. While other communities later benefitted from state construction grants, Homer has been faithfully paying off its loan and developing its library into a center for community life. Homer Library promotes early literacy through its work with parents and young children; supports educational achievement by encouraging reading and learning throughout the school years; enhances lifelong learning for adults through access to up-to-date materials, workshops, and events such as the Big Read, Walk-in Tech help, author readings, civic engagement programs, and rooms for community meetings; and nurtures economic vitality through access to practical resources and tools for entrepreneurship and financial competence.

Given the current economic climate, it is imperative that we find ways to reduce costs in order to maintain the library services this community not only wants, but truly needs. Refinancing our loan to reduce the existing interest rate would significantly improve our fiscal situation and our ability to continue providing library service to Homer and the surrounding areas.

Thank you for considering this inquiry.

ann hligon

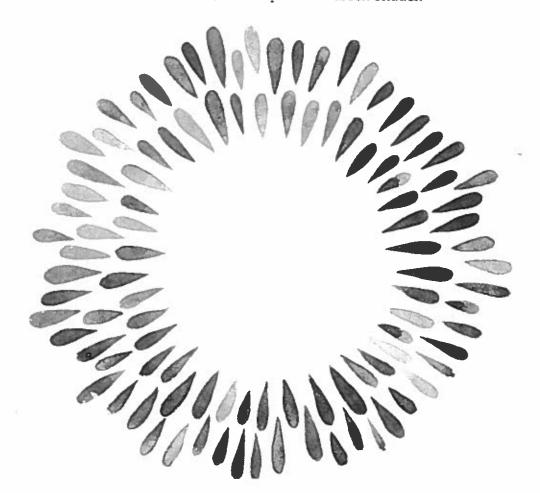
Sincerely,

Ann Dixon, Director Homer Public Library

cc: Katie Koester, City Manager, City of Homer

DOROTHY STOLTZ

with Susan M. Mitchell, Cen Campbell, Rolf Grafwallner, Kathleen Reif, and Stephanie Mareck Shauck



INSPIRED COLLABORATION

IDEAS for DISCOVERING and APPLYING YOUR POTENTIAL

parents, but extend their reach by training home-visiting nurses and low-income housing staff on early literacy.

"No matter the origin of my inspiration—national or local, library or school—the goal is for me to demonstrate and teach parents how to play with their children in ways that help them develop prereading skills," says Claudia Haines, youth services librarian, Homer, Alaska. Librarians encourage families to talk, sing, read, write, and play together. Songs, rhymes, bounces, shakey eggs, board books, and wiggles and giggles are part of the early literacy toolbox.

Other tools for maximizing excellence in libraries include skill development tenacity, and competence.

Elaine & Gilda Roadshow

"You already demonstrate and model early literacy practices in your library storytimes to great effect," says Elaine Czarnecki, Johns Hopkins University instructor
and reading specialist to Maryland children's librarians. "The question is, how can
you increase your impact on children? We suggest that you become more intentional
about what you are already doing. How can you think about why the components of
a storytime are important to children and their development? How can you stretch
your focus to not only present storytime but to help parents fulfill their role as first
teacher? How can you convey early literacy tips to parents and caregivers during
the storytime? The objective is to enhance your role as a librarian who can support
parents to inspire their children to learn."

How did an educator like Elaine come to develop close working partnerships with public librarians? A librarian who attended a local reading conference heard Elaine and Dr. Gilda Martinez describe their work as reading specialists at Johns Hopkins University in 1999. They spoke about the importance of parents incorporating public library visits in preschool children's development and school readiness. The librarian told her supervisor, who initiated a meeting between the reading specialists and public library administrators. That meeting led to a training to reinforce early literacy knowledge and storytime presentation techniques, and to develop new skills to interact with parents.

Skills such as thinking things through will increase our power to discern and illuminate our minds. Flexibility, adaptability, and resilience can support our ability to envision, plan, and implement new ideas, as well as reinforce what's working well. Skills such as listening and responding to families help us foresee what public library service can become.

Elaine and Gilda traveled across Maryland in 2000 and 2001 into each of its twenty-four jurisdictions to discuss ideas on how librarians can better model emerging literacy skills, such as oral language comprehension, concepts about print, phonological awareness, and the alphabetic principle. They led discussions about what librarians could do differently to encourage parents and caregivers to extend the storytime at home.

Mediocrity Is Not an Option

How do you partner with colleagues in your profession when you are being bombarded by a mishmash of visionary forces? On the one hand, you are being asked to envision what public libraries could and should become for children and their families and caregivers. You are also being asked to deal with shorter-range daily issues.

Your success, satisfaction, and, at times, sanity will rely on your ability to think things through completely.

Influential forces may include leaders in the fields of libraries, education, and health. Early childhood initiatives often have the backing of funders and mandate makers as well as community leaders at the local, state, national, and international levels.

Reading with Sevie. Homer (AK) Public Library.





Office of the Mayor

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June 14, 2016

City Council, City of Kenai 210 Fidalgo Avenue #200 Kenai, AK 99611

Dear Kenai City Council Members,

Over the past ten years, demand for housing in Homer has steadily grown driving housing prices steadily upward. The result was a gap between what housing cost and what many Homer working families could afford, particularly among younger residents and those in the hospitality and health care service industries. Recognizing that access to affordable housing helps keep young families in Homer and produces other important community benefits (increased health and wellbeing, improved educational outcomes, and lower social service costs for local and state governments) the City of Homer has supported affordable housing development.

Many of these residences were developed by KPHI--one on land donated by the City of Homer and one on land sold to KPHI specifically for affordable housing development. KPHI has a history of successfully utilizing subsidy funding from Alaska Housing Finance Corporation to provide affordable housing with tangible results for Kenai Peninsula residents.

The City of Homer is pleased to write a letter in support of a project that will increase the availability of affordable housing opportunities and improve quality of life for Kenai Peninsula residents.

Sincerely,

Mary E. Wythe, Mayor



Administration

491 East Pioneer Avenue Homer, Alaska 99603

(p) 907-235-8121 x2222 (f) 907-235-3148

Date: June 1, 2016

To: Honorable Mike Navarre, Kenai Peninsula Borough Mayor

And the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly

From: Katie Koester, City Manager

Re: 2017 KPB Budget and Landfill Management Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on potential changes proposed for the Kenai Peninsula Borough Landfill Management Plan. Specifically, I am addressing the proposal to close landfills one day a week and on holidays. Landfill closure, especially in the summer, poses public health, environmental safety and economic concern.

The City of Homer's Port and Harbor manages the only non-official borough transfer site on the Kenai Peninsula. At 49 acres, Homer's Port and Harbor provides moorage for 920 vessels in reserved slips, with an additional 6,000 feet of transient moorage for ships up to 150'. A barge basin and haul out facility supports additional large vessels. The City provides as many as twenty five-yard dumpsters in eleven different locations throughout the Harbor and Spit area specifically for marine vessel trash, providing a convenient, safe disposal alternative to dumping trash in coastal waters. The harbor contracts for this refuse collection and disposal service, which costs approximately \$50,000 annually.

While harbor dumpsters are posted for vessel trash only, in reality many of the residents from both inside and outside city limits bring their garbage to the Spit because of a lack in transfer stations out East End Road and within Homer City limits. This makes the harbor dumpsters a quasi-refuse transfer site that collects additional garbage from area residents. Residents of the south-side of Kachemak Bay utilize the harbor dumpsters for disposal as well, rather than transporting it to the transfer site facility located on Baycrest Hill.

The landfill closures under consideration will only make the Spit a more convenient site for residents looking to dispose of their waste, especially after weekend and long holiday weekend household cleanup activities. To compound the problem, these closures coincide with the peak tourism on the Homer Spit. Normal collection services during these periods of high volume waste generation will be inadequate. Increasing the frequency of disposal at these times will not be an option as the transfer site will be closed causing dumpster overflow and creating litter-strewn mini dump sites appealing only to scavenger birds and subject to further dispersal by coastal winds.

Uncontained trash poses public safety risks, is a threat to the marine ecosystem and compromises Homer's reputation as a first-class tourism destination. The health of marine resources and visitor facilities are critically important to Homer's economy which relies heavily on fishing and tourism.

For these reasons, the City of Homer supports keeping the Baycrest Hill Transfer Facility open on its current schedule. If closures are considered, we respectfully ask that you avoid any closures during the busy summer months and avoid a weekday/holiday closure schedule which causes the Transfer Facility to be closed two consecutive days.

Thank you for your service to the residents and communities of the Kenai Peninsula.

Kate Foestes

Sincerely,

Katie Koester

City Manager

Much support

Thank you for your

Continued support

of the museum.

Challed I

On behalf of the Homer Society of Natural History's Board of Directors, thank you for your recent generous donation to the Pratt Museum. Your support means a lot to us. Thank you.

Shand you so much for , your support. Your Sand Johns &

HOMER FOUNDATION

Quarterly Report to Fund Holders

Jan - Mar 2016

Fund Holder City of Homer

Fund City of Homer Fund

Fund Type: Field of Interest

Fund Code: 1305

PORTFOLIO SHARE (Corpus)

Beginning Balance 182,366.30

Contributions - Withdrawals -

Portfolio Market Change 18,641.37

Ending Balance 201,007.67

AVAILABLE FOR DISTRIBUTION (Earnings)

Beginning Balance 6,853.84

Earnings Allocation 6,276.71

Grants Awarded:

none this quarter -

Grants Total -

Transfers to Restricted Fund -

Ending Balance 13,130.55