



City of Homer

www.cityofhomer-ak.gov

Office of the City Manager

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City Manager's Report

TO: Mayor Wythe and Homer City Council
FROM: Katie Koester, City Manager
DATE: March 23, 2016
SUBJECT: City Manager's Report – March 29, 2016

Changing the dates of the camping season

Due to unseasonably warm weather and many events around town last weekend, I opened by notice (attached) camping on the Homer spit 2 weeks in advance of the regular season (April 1 - October 30). This brings up the question of whether or not we should permanently open our camping season early. Opening the season early does put a strain on parks staff as they need to begin collecting fees early and enforcing the 14 day rule. Parks does not hire seasonal staff until mid-April and Parks Coordinator Angie Otteson is the lone staff tasked with parks until then. Nevertheless, Angie believes she can handle a March 15 date and that the demand warrants it. The City made \$156,000 in campground fees last year, which should increase this year with an increase in the fee passed by Council in December. Though you have an Ordinance before you tonight that addresses campgrounds, I believe it would be cleaner and easier for the public to follow in a separate ordinance.

Welcome a new face at the HVFD

After over 30 years of service to the City and Homer Volunteer Fire Department, Elaine Grabowski is retiring. Elaine has been an anchor at the Fire Department and has seen it grow and transform. She keeps the department in top shape, in line, and cares for the employees and volunteers. In addition to that, she is a fire fighter and EMT and always ready to lend a hand. Please give Elaine a congratulations and thank you when you see her. Luckily we are not losing Elaine entirely; she plans on taking the summer off and returning as a volunteer.

Jaclyn Arndt was hired to fill the vacated Department Services Coordinator position. Jaclyn was born and raised in Homer. After graduating from the KPBSD Connection Homeschool Program, she moved to Milwaukee, WI for three years to attend school at UW-Milwaukee. In 2012 Jaclyn returned home and began pursuing her interest in Emergency Medical Services, getting her State of Alaska certifications as an EMT-1, FF-1, and FF-2 while volunteering at the Homer Volunteer Fire Department. Please welcome Jaclyn to the City of Homer team.

SAFR Grant for staff at HVFD

As you recall from the budget conversations last year, the Fire Department is in dire need of additional staff. They have had a vacant Assistant Chief position for years and staff is strained to the max from picking up all the additional duties of the Assistant Chief as the demands for

services at the department have continued to grow. Combined with a need for succession planning and continuity in leadership when the Chief is unavailable, the department makes a very good argument for the position and I am committed to working diligently on finding a solution to bring to the Council. One bright spot is a grant opportunity to fund the position through FEMA that has come to our attention. The grant does not require the City to commit to funding the position after the grant funds expire, however, given the need for the position and the importance of Fire/EMS, I would plan on asking Council for this authorization when the time comes. The City has applied for the SAFR grant and we should know by early June if we are successful.

Audit update

This year the Finance Department hired an audit prep service to help the department prepare for the audit. The consultants spend 3 days working with Finance. With the turnover in the department (the three most senior staff), John and I felt that the extra professional help would be necessary to avoid spending even more of the auditor's time. The consultants' work isn't limited to audit preparation. It will make our Finance Department more efficient with respect of identifying and refining the current processes and effective in terms of improving transparency within the Finance Department and the interactions with other departments.

The City's Auditors will be here conducting the audit fieldwork from 3/21 through 4/1. The completion of the final audit report (Comprehensive Annual Financial Report – CAFR) is expected by the end of June, which is about a month later than normal. This is due to the impact of the new reporting requirements on unfunded pension liability.

KPEDD CEDS planning meeting

Councilmember Zak and I attended an all-day Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) planning session for Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District, the Peninsula's ARDOR, on March 15. We learned a lot of good information about the economic climate on the peninsula and demographic trends. This group is responsible for promoting economic development on the entire Kenai Peninsula. I am proud to report that three Homer representatives were at the meeting to make sure that Southern Peninsula priorities were considered when setting the goals and strategies of the organization; in addition to Councilmember Zak and myself, Julie Woodworth of FNBA was there.

Drug use in Homer

A number of Councilmembers have brought to me their deep concern with the growing drug problem, particularly heroin, in Homer. Although the City does not have great resources at this time, it is a problem that needs to be acknowledged. I am not sure what the City's role is. A work session is scheduled for April 11th to spend some time brainstorming how the City can give attention to this problem. It is not an easy solution – especially with the lack of funding – but acknowledging the problem and shedding some light on it may be the first step. I have a list of community members I will reach out to individually, but please let me know if you have suggestions for invitees or recommendations on how to structure the conversation.

Enc:

Notice of opening Mariner Park Campground
Carrie Creek letter of support from Mayor Wythe
Letter to State Legislative Delegation on smaller capital projects



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NOTICE

March 16, 2016

Due to unseasonably warm weather and community events in March that bring visitors to town, effective March 16, 2016, I am opening Mariner Park Campground for camping. This is in addition to camp spaces 1 to 16 of the Fishing Hole Campground next to Pier One Theater on the Homer Spit that were opened in January. Pursuant to HCC 19.08.020, regular camping season will commence for all City campgrounds on April 1st. However, according to Homer City Code 19.08.030d, they can be opened at any other time by order of the city manager.

Katie Koester
City Manager



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March 17, 2016

Re: 3050-3 Carrie Creek

Joan M. Antonson, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks, Office of History & Archaeology
550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1310
Anchorage, AK 99501-3565

Dear Ms. Antonson,

I am writing my endorsement for the official naming of a Homer area creek originating in an unnamed pond near Skyline Drive and running northward before its confluence with Twitter Creek. I am happy to support this effort on behalf of the petitioners' wish to commemorate the memory of their daughter who grew up playing near this creek.

I understand that the only other land owner along the creek favors the petitioners' naming request; I also understand that the creek is not currently officially named. Registering the name "Carrie Creek" will be a great source of comfort and pride for Carrie's parents.

Sincerely,

Mary E. Wythe, Mayor



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March 17, 2016

Senator Gary Stevens
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801
Delivered electronically

RE: City of Homer Legislative Capital Priorities

Senator Stevens,

As you are aware, the top capital priority for the City of Homer is a new public safety building. We are pleased to report that progress has been made including deciding on a phased approach with the police station and rehabilitation of the existing fire station as phase 1. In addition to the Public Safety Building, I want to highlight a couple of small items in the City of Homer's top 5 request that could be purchased quickly and have a great impact on life safety in Homer.

Harbor Fire Cart Replacement: \$205,000

The Harbor is in need of 9 new fire carts to replace the current carts that are over 20 years old and failing due to the harsh marine environment. These carts are stored at each ramp and act as mini mobile fire engines capable of fighting boat fires with foam and seawater. There is no readymade cart that can handle Alaska's unique circumstances. The grant would be used to purchase parts that will be assembled by Port Maintenance using salvaged materials from the current fire carts. Staff has built a successful prototype, but needs 9 more for full coverage in the Homer Harbor.

Brush/Wildland Firefighting Truck: \$150,000

The existing brush truck is a 1990 converted Ford F-350 that is incapable of handling the weight of all the necessary firefighting equipment. A new higher horsepower and four-wheel drive truck outfitted for fighting remote fires will increase the Homer Volunteer Fire Department's ability to provide reliable service. In addition to wildfires, this truck is necessary to access many homes in Homer located down roads that are too rough for an engine.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about some of the smaller, yet no less critical, needs the City of Homer has. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Katie Koester, City Manager