

ANNUAL REPORT



2016-2017





2017 HOMER CITY COUNCIL



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The City of Homer operates under a City Council-City Manager form of government. City Council works in unison with Homer's City Manager, who implements the Council's policy decisions and oversees all aspects of City operations.

The October 2017 municipal election added two new Council members, Rachel Lord and Carolyn Venuti each for three-year terms, filling seats vacated by David Lewis and Catriona Reynolds who chose not to seek re-election. Together, Council members form a diverse, dedicated group of elected representatives.

With the assistance of public and staff input, Council members addressed a wide range of

issues in support of Homer's quality of life and local economy, and to ensure public safety.

- Helped preserve the long-term health of local beaches by regulating where driving is allowed on Homer's beaches.
- Strengthened the long-term sustainability of the Animal Shelter by passing new animal control policies recommended by a special task force.
- Worked with the Police Station Task Force to develop a scaled-down design concept that meets both public safety needs and cost

YOUR CITY

The City of Homer website makes conducting business with the City quick and easy, whether at home or on the go with mobile devices.

You can find current information on City Council and Commission proceedings, job postings, zoning and much, much more at:

www.cityofhomer-ak.gov

You can also pay your utility bill, reserve a park pavilion, renew your library book or browse the catalog for your next good read!

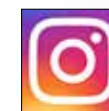
Sign up for an email subscription to stay updated on the City news you want as it changes.



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City Council meets on the second and fourth Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. in Cowles Chamber located on the lower level of City Hall, 491 East Pioneer Avenue.

Open government

The public is always welcome to attend or to listen to live broadcasts aired and streamed on KBBI, am 890.

Agendas are posted on the City of Homer website and at City Hall. For information about meeting schedules and agenda items, go to the City Council webpage:

www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/citycouncil

- Approved funding to extend Greatland St. to Pioneer Avenue, and added the newly completed Grubstake and Snowbird Streets to the City's official road maintenance map.
- Supported community projects by providing matching funds for construction of the South Peninsula Athletic and Recreation Center, and accepted a Rasmuson Foundation grant to assist construction of the Boathouse Pavilion at the former Harbormaster Office site.
- Asked voters to amend the HART Program to allow it to be used not only to build and improve roads and trails, but to maintain them too. Prop 1 passed with 78% of the vote, providing a budget solution without sweeping cuts to City services or new taxes.



Homer's commitment to protecting the Bridge Creek Watershed earned the **Source Water System of the Year** award by the Alaska Rural Water Association. The award lauded Homer's community involvement and land use policies and recommended Homer as a model for other communities who source their drinking water from surface water.

The quality of your drinking water was also awarded. In 2016, Homer won **Best Tasting Water in Alaska**, topping all other entries in clarity, taste and aroma.

In 2017, Todd Cook, Homer's Water and Wastewater Treatment Superintendent was named **Wastewater Operator of the Year**.



The City of Homer achieves its vision of providing well maintained public infrastructure, quality essential services and dynamic public places by staying committed to operational excellence.

City staff bring integrity and commitment to serving their community, and take pride in providing high-quality products and services to their customers.

Their professionalism has earned statewide recognition.

Committed to a safe, healthy community

Kudos to the citizens of Homer and the Homer Police Department for helping make Homer one of the safest cities in the State! Based on the 2016 FBI crime rate report, **Homer ranked as the second safest city in Alaska**. Of all the crime reported, most were property crimes—not violent crimes. Violent offenses represented less than 10% of all crimes. Our Police Department's highly trained, professional staff plays a big role in these favorable conditions.



They also promote a positive, safe environment by prioritizing community policing. The Department works with the community to address citizen concerns, to engage and maintain citizen involvement in crime prevention activities, and to employ de-escalating techniques to defuse potentially violent encounters.

HPD's naloxone training (part of a multi-agency strategy to prevent the harms from opioid drug use), the City's involvement in the Green Dot Program and Project Drive are community policing examples that have garnered regional and statewide acclaim.



Every year the staff and dedicated volunteers of Homer's Volunteer Fire Department provide thousands of hours of service to the community -- responding 24/7/365 to nearly 700 calls for fire and medical emergency services, putting hours into training to keep their skills up-to-date, and conducting public education and prevention programs throughout Homer.

In support of these essential services, the City completed much needed safety upgrades to the 40 year-old fire station (the first since 1995!) and hired an Assistant Fire Chief (a key operational position that had been vacant since 2009!)

The renovation extends the functional life of the Fire Hall and supports the health, safety and effectiveness of our emergency responders.

With the help of a FEMA Assistance to Firefighters grant, the City of Homer was pleased to hire Terry Kadel as Assistant Fire Chief in September 2017, filling a position that, due to budget constraints, had been empty since 2009.

Terry hailed from the Girdwood Volunteer Fire Department, where he served the past two decades. He began there as a volunteer and worked his way up to Deputy Chief.

Terry is highly qualified to support area firefighters and paramedics through on-going technical trainings and is excited to expand the Department's corps of volunteers.

Filling the Assistant Chief position greatly benefits community safety. Call volume and demands on the department have increased significantly since 2009. The assistant position brings staffing up to the level necessary for safe and more effective incident response.



HPD was recognized for their **Superior Dedication to the Well-Being of Kenai Peninsula Residents, Businesses and Visitors** at the 2016 Kenai Peninsula Borough Industry Appreciation Day.

In 2017, the Alaska Highway Safety Office awarded HPD a generous grant to expand the reach of Project Drive, an educational clinic aimed at reducing teen drunk driving. Since 2011, Project Drive has helped put the brakes on some sobering statistics. In Homer, the annual average number of Minor Consuming Alcohol arrests have declined from 16 to 5.8 and the average number of minors charged with driving after consuming alcohol has gone from 7.8 to 3.2.



An Assistant Chief also provides crucial backup leadership when the Fire Chief is away and during large, complex emergencies. The City was fortunate to have Terry on board to take command after long-time Fire Chief Bob Painter retired in early 2018. Terry's promotion to Fire Chief made a smooth leadership transition for the department.



Committed to quality services and

dynamic public places



The national publication *Library Journal* recognized Homer Public Library as a 2016 STAR library, an award given only to the top-performing public libraries in the U.S.

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Melissa Jacobsen, City Clerk earned the prestigious **Master Municipal Clerk** professional accreditation for Municipal Clerks from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks.



Melissa was promoted to City Clerk after Jo Johnson retired in May 2017 after fourteen years of exemplary service to the citizens of Homer.



Bryan Hawkins earned **Marine Port Executive** certification from the International Association of Maritime Port Executives.



Deputy Harbor Master Matt Clarke awarded as **Employee of the Year** at the 2017 Alaska Port & Harbor Administrators conference in Petersburg.



City Planner, Rick Abboud achieved certification by the **American Institute of Certified Planners**.



Officer Jim Knott successfully completed one of the most difficult training courses for a police officer and is now a **certified polygraph operator**.



On a daily basis, Mike Illg, Community Recreation Manager, sees how passionate people are about recreating and being outdoors, and the value of Homer's parks and recreation for health and quality of life.

Annually, just under 24,000 repeat customers participated in 96 different Community Recreation programs like pickleball, basketball and volleyball, art and language classes, health & safety classes, dance...the list goes on!

In 2017, the Boathouse Pavilion and the Kachemak Bay Water Trail Pavilion took shape on the Homer Spit. And thanks to over 378 hours of work by 30 Homer volunteers (and funds from the HART Program), Karen Hornaday Park has some new trails to explore! Check out the Woodard Creek Nature Trail and new access trails along Fairview Avenue and the park's road.



Visitors appreciate Homer's public recreation spaces, too. In 2017, Park personnel collected a record \$180,000 in camping fees. Parks also completed work on several capital projects including a new camp fee building at Mariner Park and a handsome timber frame fish cleaning station at the Nick Dudiak Fishing Lagoon, complete with overhead hoses, lights and webbing to eliminate bird conflicts.



As part of its commitment to the 130,746 patrons who passed through the library's doors in 2017, the Library issued 750 new library cards and assisted with 173,069 loans. They also hosted 267 events for adults and 201 events for youth that help transform lives through literacy, community engagement and lifelong learning.

Youth Services Librarian Claudia Haines exemplifies these values in her work. She champions family engagement, media literacy and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) when working with school groups, families and a variety of other youth organizations at the library.

In 2017, she served on the Caldecott Award Committee to help select the most distinguished American picture book for children. Claudia shared many of the 600 books under consideration with kids during weekly Storytime. Their engagement and responses greatly assisted her review.

In 2017, HPL received Google's prestigious *Libraries Ready To Code* grant to fund a year of programs in support of computational thinking and computer science for families.



As part of the grant, Claudia will participate with librarians from across the country to share their experiences and develop a *Ready To Code* toolkit for other librarians to use.



Investing in projects that will benefit the city today and in the future

2016 and 2017 saw major infrastructure projects funded through a combination of Homer Accelerated Roads & Trail funds, General funds and grants. Accomplishments included road building and rehab for ten City streets, water main and sewer line improvements for Shellfish Avenue, South Slope Drive and Kachemak Drive, and the Phase I expansion at Hickerson Memorial Cemetery.

INFRASTRUCTURE



Extending Grubstake Street to connect Lake Street and Heath Street, and the paving of Snowbird Street were completed in 2016. The project, funded with a State of Alaska appropriation and HART funds provides an important east-west travel option to help ease traffic congestion.



A failing storm drain on Bunnell Ave was repaired using a new technique called slip lining, in which a flexible liner is inserted then expanded with compressed air and cured with UV light. This new pipe is stronger than the original and its installation method has



The City keeps a dedicated focus on pedestrian safety, which in 2016 included completing 3,200 linear feet of sidewalk and other safety improvements on Soundview Avenue. The City was pleased to accept a Transportation Alternatives Program grant from the Alaska Department of Transportation to help bring this project to completion. It provides our kids a safe route to school while under their own power, and it improves accessible pedestrian trail connectivity in Homer's central core.



The mooring buoys located at the Small Boat Harbor entrance were replaced and additional cleats were added to the dock to improve ship berthing. Passenger safety was enhanced by removing trip hazards and installing bird nest deterrents on the dock approach.



The Port & Harbor converted the Small Boat Harbor's high mast lights to energy efficient LED's. The project reduces maintenance costs and reduces energy use by 40%!

The new light fixtures can be focused downward on desired areas, significantly reducing light pollution while maintaining current light levels.



the added benefit of avoiding digging up the pavement, which saves cost and lessens disturbance to nearby businesses and residents.

Industrial users will benefit from a new cargo laydown/storage area located on the uplands near the Deep Water Dock, complete with paved access roads and security features. A new communications tower provides improved wireless voice and data services to the general public and for the City's public safety communications.

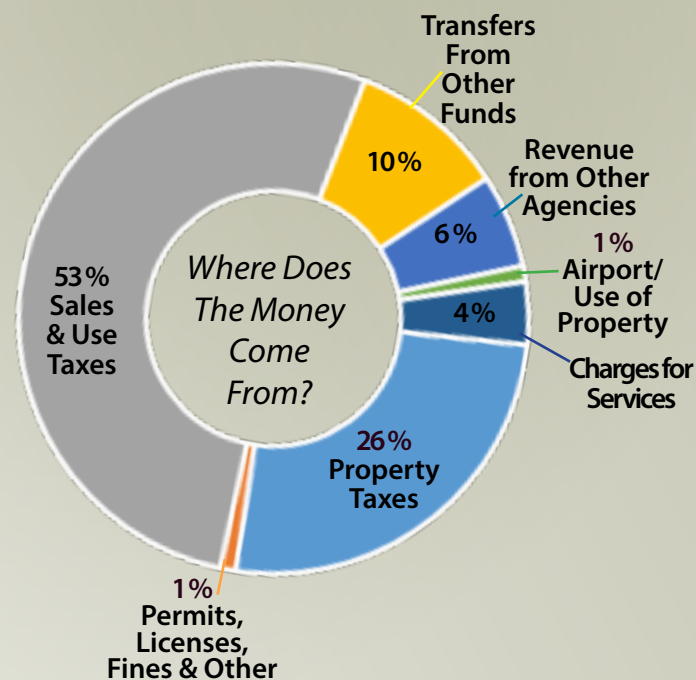
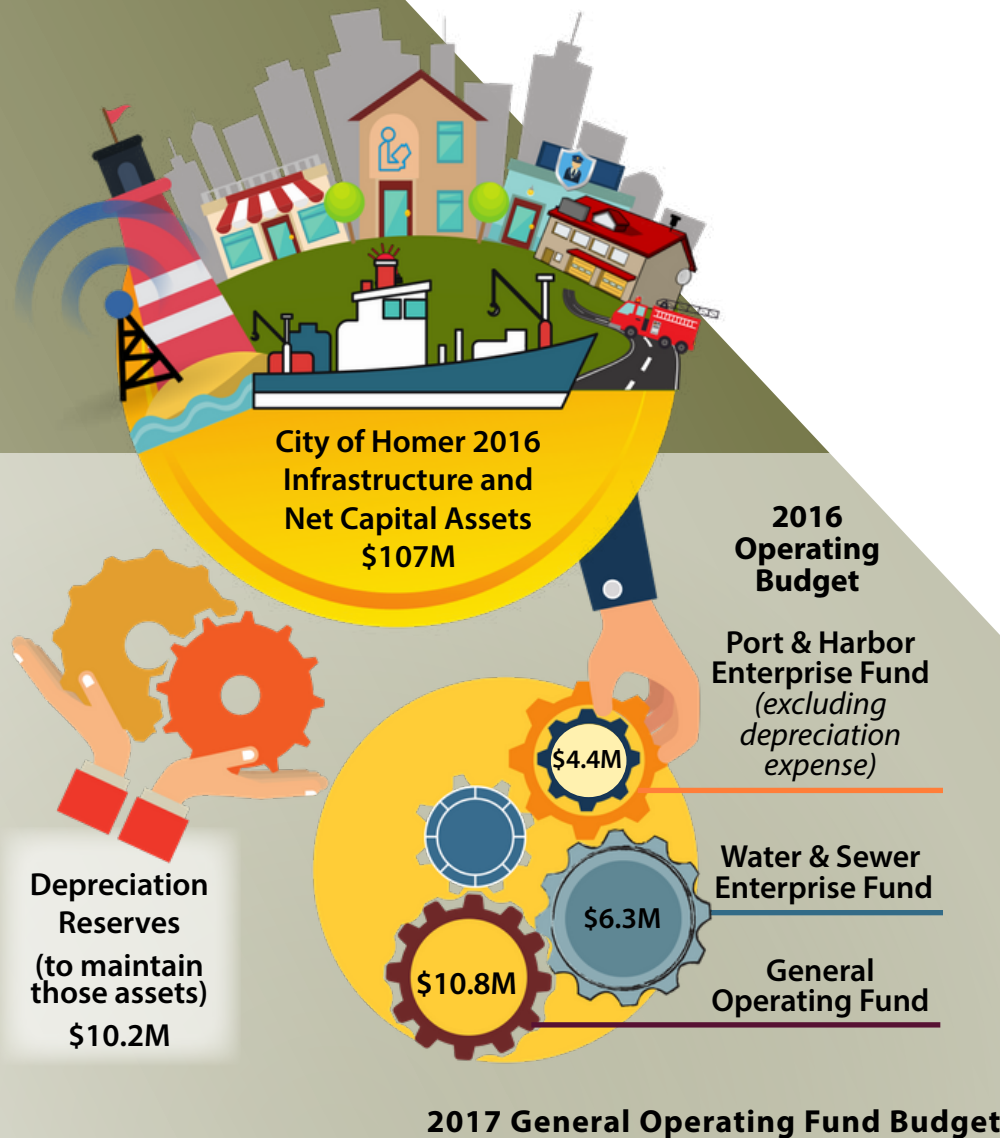
The City's operating budget (comprised of the Port & Harbor Enterprise Fund, the Water & Sewer Enterprise Fund and the General Fund) is one of the most important working and planning tools used by City Council to determine levels of public service, infrastructure and facility maintenance for the community.

It is created with the purpose of providing a wide range of high quality public services while responsibly stewarding municipal capital assets and financial resources.

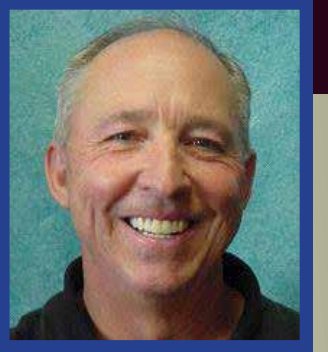
Each year an amount from the operating budget is added to depreciation reserves. However, there is never enough to cover full depreciation amounts. Eventually, approval of a ballot measure by voters is needed to fund any required capital asset replacement, such as construction of a much needed new police station.

The general fund is the general operating fund of the City to provide services such as police and fire protection, and for the Public Works department to maintain our roads, trails, parks and other public facilities.

These activities are funded primarily by sales tax and property tax revenues.



MAYOR'S MESSAGE



Bryan Zak

A balanced budget continues to underscore the City of Homer's commitment to fiscal stability and sustainable services. Each year presents known challenges and evolving conditions with the City budget, most notably the impact of state revenue declines and increasing operating costs.

The City's fiscal health was stable in 2016. This stability continued in 2017 due to the steady nature of growth in Homer and our diverse economy, especially when compared to other parts of Alaska. Conservative spending, finding ways to save public dollars and long-term planning in anticipation of shrinking State support played an important role as well.

The City and the community have been proactive in addressing fiscal issues, coming together to solve problems and fulfill needs. In 2017, voters approved a permanent change to the definition of HART (Homer Accelerated Roads and Trails) to allow a portion of these road and trail building funds to be used to maintain our roads and trails. This change prioritizes taking care of the infrastructure we have and relieves some pressure on the General Fund. I am proud of City Council and the voters for dealing with impending shortfalls now instead of waiting for the last minute. I am hopeful that this change to HART, in combination with continued careful spending and economic stability will maintain the current level of City services.

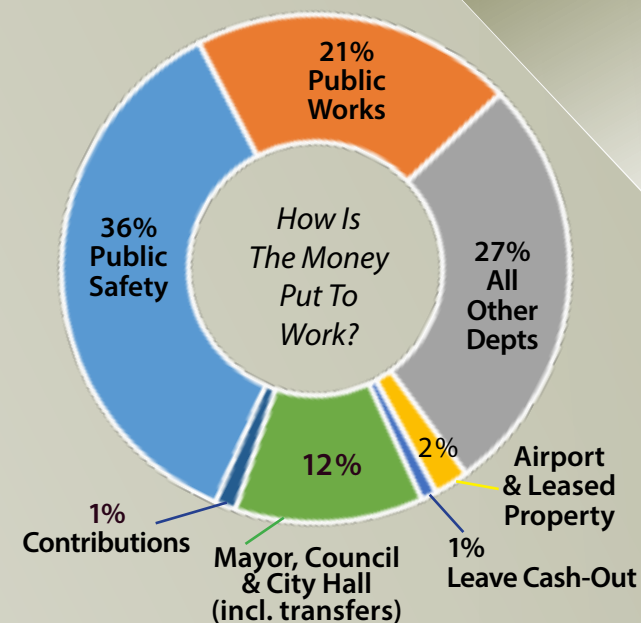
City Council is the steward of the public's infrastructure assets which includes everything from roads to water pipes, to the Library and Fire Hall. As responsible managers, we must make sure we set aside funds for the wear and tear on these facilities. Looking ahead, any growth in government, be it new facilities or new services to meet community needs, must be met with a serious conversation about revenue. Aligning revenues and expenditures while maintaining appropriate levels of reserve funds is essential to the City's long-term fiscal sustainability and community health.

Sustainable services

It has been a pleasure to work as your Mayor alongside City Council and the community to deliver on Council priorities.

I commend our dedicated City staff for their hard work in 2017 to provide high quality essential services.

Homer is an amazing community filled with talented individuals and organizations that make this a place I am proud to call home. Thank you for the honor and privilege to serve as your Mayor.

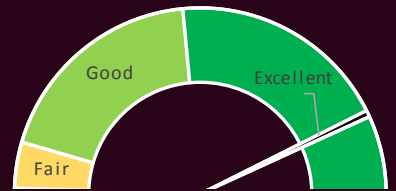


Building on our strengths

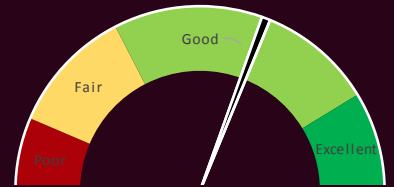


In 2017, the City began updating the Comprehensive Plan. The plan articulates community goals and aspirations for town development and provides a basis for decisions regarding land use policies, facilities and services to support residents' well-being, quality of life and prosperity.

City Council is continuing to work on the City's highest priority infrastructure need: a new police station. Our 41-year old police headquarters is famously cramped and seismically deficient; its layout puts the health and safety of officers, the public and those in custody at risk. Council is nearing consensus on a building design that fixes these problems while keeping project costs at a minimum, with the goal of putting a bond proposal before the voters to fund construction.



When asked to rate Homer, 91% of the Business, Retention & Expansion survey takers rated Homer as an excellent place to live; 65% rated it as a good place to do business.



**City Spirit
Award of Excellence to
Daniel Zatz, SPARC &
City of Homer
Alaska Municipal League
2016**



**Most Artistic American City
Expedia Top 25 Award
2017**



**Alaska's Best
Travel Destination
Alaska Business Monthly
2017**

LOOKING AHEAD



Knowing that local businesses are vital to Homer's economic health and resilience, the Economic Development Commission undertook their first and highly successful Business Retention & Expansion Survey. Launched in July 2017, 112 businesses participated. The EDC gained valuable insight from local business owners and used the survey results to formulate goals for improving Homer's business climate.

Their long-term goals support two high priority Port & Harbor infrastructure projects: a Barge Mooring/Haul-Out Repair facility in the Homer Small Boat Harbor and a new Large Vessel Harbor.

Homer's Port & Harbor is a major economic driver for both Homer and the region. These new facilities address mooring shortages in the small boat harbor, while improving Homer's capacity to serve the region's marine industrial and commercial fishing sectors, to accommodate the new line of USCG fast-response cutters and to help strengthen Homer's renowned marine trades sector.



Steady progress is being made on both these long-term infrastructure projects. The US Army Corps of Engineers recently approved moving forward with a study for the harbor expansion; 35% designs have been completed for the Barge Mooring/Large Vessel Haul-Out Facility.