

CITY OF HOMER NEWSLETTER



VOL. III - ISSUE IV | DECEMBER 2023

WHAT'S INSIDE?

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

Happy Holidays

FROM THE CITY OF HOMER

SISTER CITY 40TH ANNIVERSARY

In 2024, Homer will celebrate the 40th anniversary of our Sister City relationship with Teshio, Hokkaido Japan! The oath of sistership was signed on April 7, 1984. To mark the milestone, Homer will be hosting delegates from Teshio. The dates of the visit are still to be determined, so stay tuned for updates!

Meanwhile, several events are in the works to enhance the experience of the delegate's visit to Homer. One of those will be a traditional performance of Taiko drums performed by local youth who participate in the Japanese Club. This Club gives youth the opportunity to learn about another culture by learning the language, participating in Japanese traditions and exchanges with youth from Homer's Sister City.

On November 13th, the Japanese Club students from West Homer Elementary and Paul Banks Elementary visited Homer City Council to highlight their preparations for the anniversary celebration.



Youth in Homer's Japanese Club addressing Homer City Council on November 13th

Under the guidance of Megumi Beams, the youth addressed the Mayor and Councilmembers in Japanese and displayed the cardboard drums they have crafted to practice their Taiko drumming. *Continued on page 3.*

- Teshio Sister City 40th Anniversary
- Library Events
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- Meet City Staff
- Municipal Art Collection
- Stay Connected with City Council

Discover something new today and see the latest City project updates information! Learn about ways community members can get involved at City Hall and in the Homer community.

Follow us on Social Media

- City Hall: [@cityofhomerak](#)
- Parks & Recreation: [@homerparksandrec](#)
- Homer Public Library: [@homerpubliclibrary](#)
- Homer Police: [@homerpolice](#)
- Fire Department: [@HomerVolFireDept](#)

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LIBRARY EVENTS

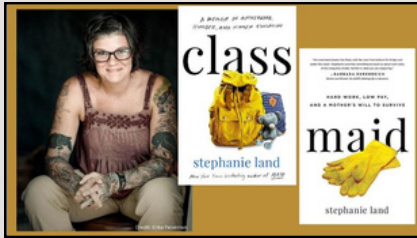
VIRTUAL AUTHOR TALKS

Zoom in and listen to your favorite authors talk about their latest books. For a complete list of Upcoming Speakers, go to librarcy.org/homerlibrary/upcoming.

December 5 at 3 pm
Let's Talk World Building with YA Fantasy Fiction Superstar Author **Victoria Aveyard**



December 12 at 10 am
Motherhood, Hunger, and Higher Education: An Author Talk with **Stephanie Land**



SPECIAL & ONGOING EVENTS



Food Pantry Donation Collection
From mid-November to mid-December, the library will accept donations of nonperishable food for the Food Pantry. We hope that all members of our community will enjoy a healthy and well-fed holiday season.



Councilmember Conversations
Noon to 1 pm, the second Tuesday of each month, September - May, at the Homer Public Library.

December 12: Rachel Lord

COMMUNITY CORNER

What's happening around the City of Homer

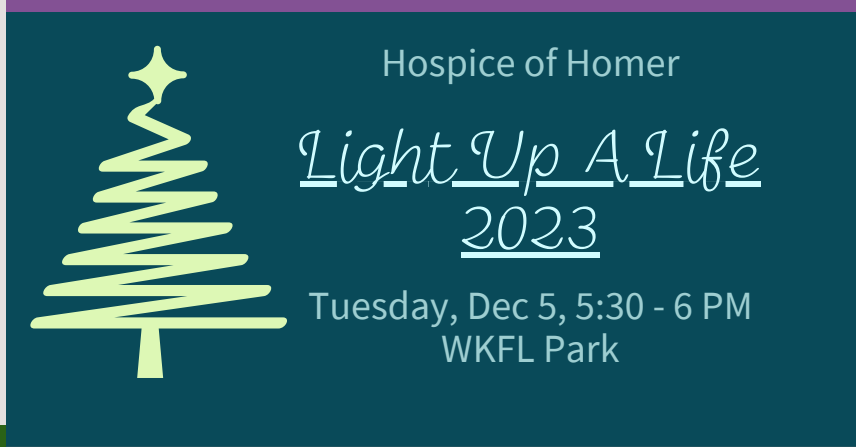
Holiday Festivities

'Tis the season to celebrate with friends and family. Homer has lots to do this season. Be sure to seek out fun things to do in the community.



35th annual Homer Nutcracker Ballet
December 2, 3, 6, 8 & 9
Homer High School Mariner Theater

[Click Here To Purchase Tickets](#)



CHECK OUT MORE LIBRARY PROGRAMS AND EVENTS



Homer Public Library
500 Hazel Street - 907-235-3180
circ@ci.homer.ak.us
www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/library



LIBRARY

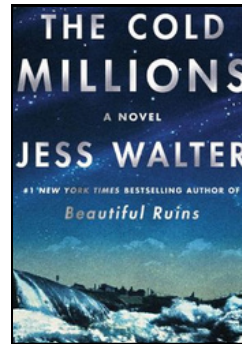
Homer has two Big Read titles for 2024:

THE BIG READ

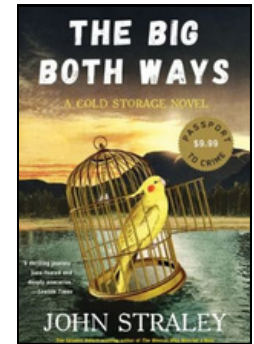
Homer public Library is gearing up for the Big Read in January and February! There are two Big Read titles in 2024: *The Cold Millions* by Jess Walter and *The Big Both Ways* by John Straley. The theme focusses on the early 20th-century history of the Northwest and Alaska, including the treatment of women, indigenous peoples, the working poor, and free speech.

Over a six-week period in January and February 2024, the community will be invited to participate in book clubs and events that promote curiosity, conversation, and engagement with the book, the library, and the community. Go to the [Friends of the Homer Library website](#) for a list of events for each book. The Friends of the Library have provided dozens of copies of each for anyone who wants to read them before January. They are available at the Library front desk.

The Cold Millions
by Jess Walter



The Big Both Ways
by John Straley



The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Big Read is an annual community reading program. Each book is chosen specifically to spark meaningful conversations and to build stronger connections within the community. Arts Midwest provides grants to non-profit organizations to fund the program. It is a special opportunity to celebrate literature and share the love of reading! You can find more information about the NEA Big Read at:

[About the National Endowment for the Arts Big Read | National Endowment for the Arts](#)

SISTER CITY 40TH ANNIVERSARY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

A fundraising effort is underway to help support the anniversary celebration, including the purchase of actual Taiko drums for the Japanese Club and to be part of the anniversary performance. City Council passed a Resolution on November 27th to create a designated donation fund that will allow residents, visitors, businesses and organizations within the community to actively participate and contribute to the 40th anniversary celebration. More details to come on how the community can contribute to this fund.

The Teshio delegates have expressed how they are looking forward to the opportunity to exchange cultures and help the new generation become global citizens through the anniversary celebration. Mayor Ken Castner's closing comments after the presentation echoed this sentiment:

"Kids. Thank you all for coming. It's always great to have a full house here at the City Council chambers. I hope you all grow up and learn how to be great citizens, vote, and maybe even run for office, or be on a commission or help with sister cities or help

everything. Community is what makes Homer great, and you are wonderful additions to the community. So thank you, thank you, thank you! Pay attention to your instructors, grow up to be smart and prosperous. Thank you."

As Homer enters into this time of celebration, we hope to raise interest and share knowledge across both cultures. We will keep you posted on upcoming celebration events.



Japanese Club member with their handmade Taiko drum (left) and introducing themselves in Japanese to Homer City Council on November 13th

PUBLIC WORKS

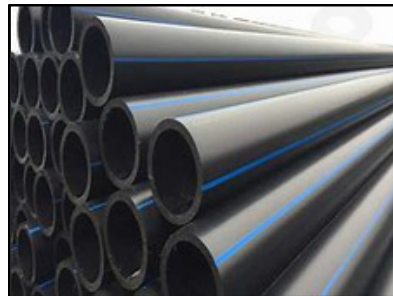
GRANT AWARDED FOR CITY WATER MAIN PROJECT

We are pleased to report that the City has been awarded a Hazard Mitigation Grant Program grant from the Alaska Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management in the amount of \$2.1 million to replace the City's Raw Water Transmission Mains.



The project will enhance the resilience of City's drinking water supply by replacing the two 47-year old cast iron raw water transmission mains that transfer water from Bridge Creek Reservoir (the city's drinking water source) to the water treatment plant. The existing cast iron pipes, brittle and corrosive in the areas acidic soil, are particularly susceptible to earthquake damage that could threaten the City's drinking water supply. Over the last several years, seismic events have necessitated small repairs to the raw water mains, underscoring the need for the replacement project.

The cast iron mains will be replaced with seismically-resilient High Density Polyethylene (HDPE) pipe, significantly mitigating potential damage by earthquakes or other natural disasters.



The replacement pipes will also have a larger diameter, optimizing the water flow from Bridge Creek Reservoir to the water treatment plant. This enhancement will supply the maximum daily flow rate of raw water to the treatment plant, with some room to spare to accommodate any future expansions of the facility.

Thanks to the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant program for helping the City create a more resilient and sustainable water infrastructure.

HOMER HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

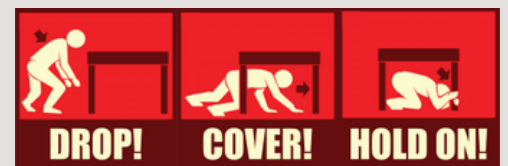
EARTHQUAKES

The purpose of the City's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LMHP) is to provide a long-term strategy to reduce disaster losses and minimize damage caused by natural disasters.

As you may have noticed, earthquakes happen frequently in the state of Alaska. According to the 2018 State of Alaska Hazard Mitigation Plan, on average, Alaska has on "great" earthquake (magnitude 8 or higher) every 13 years, one magnitude 7-8 every year, and six magnitude 6-7 earthquakes every year. Homer has a 5% probability of severe shaking in Homer in the next 50 years.

One long-term strategy identified in Homer's LHMP to mitigate earthquake damage is seismic retrofits to vulnerable facilities, like the one planned for the Raw Water Transmission Mains.

Individual households can also do things to mitigate loss and damage. Knowing what to do ahead of time can help you respond quickly and prevent severe injury. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) share practical tips on how to respond in case of an earthquake.



Click here to learn more
[Stay Safe During an Earthquake](#)



Find the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan on the City's website:
[City of Homer Local Hazard Mitigation Plan](#)

PUBLIC WORKS

WHEN IT SNOWS.....

Winter means snow, and when it falls Homer Public Works crews will be out working hard to keep our roads and sidewalks passable and safe. It's a big job! The City clears over 100 lane miles of City streets and certain State roads as well. It takes 14 hours to clear all of Homer's roads, so plows start early -- at 4 am. We are reminding residents about how to help make the clearing process more efficient and safe for both the equipment operators and your property.



PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY FROM GETTING PLOWED!

How do I do that? Keep roads and Right-of-Ways clear, so snow plows and sanding trucks can do their job and keep roads safe for everyone. If not, unfortunately, you could be fined.

- Blocking the Right-of-Way and Roads is prohibited.
 - Keep everything out of the Right-of-Way and off roads.
 - Do not push snow into roadways or into the Right-of-Way.

What is the Right of Way? It's the roads, sidewalks and also the space between the road and your property that is used for utilities, channeling of storm water via ditches, area for the City to store plowed snow and accessing roads for maintenance.

Other helpful tips:

- Check the City website for road closures and winter advisories
- Be prepared! Carry a kit in your car in case you get stranded

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities clears approximately 20 miles of state roadways within the City of Homer. These roads include the Sterling Hwy., West Hill Rd., East Hill Rd., East End Road, Kachemak Drive, Homer Spit Road, Ocean Drive and Lake Street between Pioneer Ave and the By-Pass. Call DOT/PF @ 235-5217 for further information concerning their roads maintenance.



PUBLIC SAFETY CORNER



In this section, we aim to keep readers informed about the latest developments in public safety in the community. Whether it's news about crime prevention, emergency preparedness, or updates on local law enforcement activities, we've got you covered. Our goal is to promote a safe and secure environment for all community members and visitors of Homer, and we believe that staying informed is a crucial part of achieving that. Read on to learn more about what's happening in public safety in Homer.



TIPS FOR A FIRE-SAFE HOLIDAY SEASON

The holidays present an increased risk of home fires--often involving Christmas trees, candles and decorations. Most of these home fires, though, can be prevented during the holidays and beyond. Here are a few basic tips to make sure your holidays are happy and bright -- and not in the flashing-siren kind of way.

DID YOU KNOW?

More than one-third of home decoration fires are started by candles.

More than 2 of every 5 decoration fires happen because decorations are placed too close to a heat source.

DID YOU KNOW?

Almost one-third of home Christmas tree fires are caused by electrical problems.

While Christmas tree fires are not common, they are **more likely to be serious** when they do.

A heat source too close to the tree causes **more than one in five** of the fires.

WHEN YOU DECK THE HALLS



Check those sets of lights you pull out of storage to insure they have been UL tested and that they don't have any broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. If damaged, discard and replace them.



Do not connect more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord, and always turn off Christmas lights before leaving home or going to bed.



If you use candles for decorations, make sure they are in stable holders and place them where they cannot be easily knocked down. Be attentive; don't go to bed or leave the house with candles burning.

WHEN YOU TRIM YOUR TREE



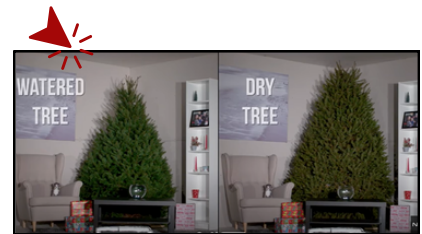
Set your tree up away from heat sources (including fireplaces or heat vents). The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks.



Add water to the tree stand and add water daily. A dry tree is dangerous because it catches fire easily. Check out this video link if you need convincing!



Take your tree down soon after the holiday. The National Fire Protection Association reports that half of home Christmas tree fires occur between December 22nd and January 5th. When disposing of your tree, never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood-burning stove. It can result in a chimney fire.



Demonstration video by the National Institute of Standards & Technology

MONTHLY TSUNAMI SIREN TESTS RESUME DEC 6TH

The Kenai Peninsula Borough Office of Emergency Management (OEM) has completed the tsunami siren upgrade project. Now that all equipment has been installed and tested, they will begin automated testing at 1:00 PM on December 6th. These tests will occur monthly on the first Wednesday of the month, rather than weekly as with the previous system. These tests help to ensure the proper functioning of the sirens and familiarize residents with the alert signal in case of an emergency.

PORT & HARBOR

STAFF PARTICIPATE IN ETT TRAINING

Homer Port and Harbor staff recently completed a four-day Emergency Technician Training (ETT) conducted by Samantha Cunningham, the Assistant EMS Chief at Homer Volunteer Fire Department. The course is important for our frontline staff who may have to provide emergency medical care to others as a part of their job. Topics included how to recognize and treat symptoms of heart attack, stroke, poison, overdose, hypothermia and cold related injuries as well as treatment for burns and a variety of other medical conditions.



HOMER HARBOR EXPANSION

STUDY UPDATE



At their November 27 meeting, City Council unanimously passed Resolution 23-130 which confirms the City's support for the continuation of the Homer Harbor Expansion General Investigation study.

The Resolution agreed to the US Army Corps of Engineers addition of geotechnical investigation and ship simulation to the scope of the study and states the City's intent to fund 25% of the increased cost of the General Investigation due to those additions. The advantages of completing geotechnical work during the feasibility study is that it provides the best information to:

- inform decisions about the amount of breakwater material needed,
- inform choices about the design and location within the project area of the preferred alternative, and
- provide solid information on which to better evaluate project feasibility.

The State of Alaska partnered with the City, covering half of the local match requirement to initiate the General Investigation. The Resolution also support the City seeking additional match support from the State of Alaska. The City has reached out to Governor Dunleavy and Representative Sarah Vance's offices with a request. You can read the Resolution and listen to the meeting discussion at <https://www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/citycouncil/city-council-regular-meeting-303>.

The USACE project development team has entered a work reduction period due to the temporary Federal funding Gap. During this period USACE PDT:

- held Environmental Stakeholder Working Group meeting on September 28, 2023;
- is coordinating with USACE's Engineer Research & Development Center's Ecological Modeling Team to organize and conduct a two-day Ecological Modeling Workshop;
- is working on vertical team approval for the Homer Small Boat Harbor Vessel Economic Survey;
- is coordinating with agencies and making preparations to be ready for environmental field work and proposed geotechnical work.

Work-in-Kind by HDR, the City's contracted Owner Representative, has slowed parallel to the USACE. They have compiled and submitted a cost estimate for proposed geotechnical work to the USACE, and plan to complete the Coastal Numerical Modeling (waves, tides/storm surge, sediment transport) of existing conditions analysis by the end of year.

Stay connected with the study at www.homerharborexansion.com!

COMMUNITY RECREATION

FUN AT THE SKI & WINTER GEAR SWAP AND TELLURIDE MOUNTAINFILM ON TOUR

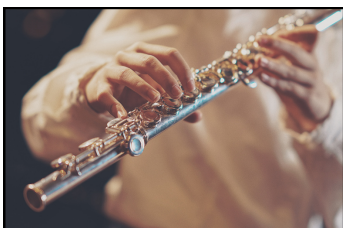


Community Recreation hosted the Annual Ski & Winter Gear Swap on Wednesday, November 8th and paired the evening with the engaging Telluride Mountainfilm Show at the Homer High School Theatre. It was a great success! An estimated 300 people attended the ski swap and 150 stayed to watch the films. The event was also successful in raising funds for support local youth organizations, including the Homer High School Cross Country Ski Team, the Homer Middle School “AK to DC” group and Homer Wilderness Leaders (aka HOWL). All in all it was a complete success and we are already have ideas how to enhance this awesome community event next year. Ideas are even brewing to help the community get ready for summer time fun and recreation by potentially offering a “Bike and Summer Gear Swap” event in the spring of 2024. Stay tuned!

COMMUNITY REC ACTIVITIES



Looking for fun activities over winter break? Check out **Youth Tumbling Classes** for toddlers, beginners and intermediate tumblers being offered December 19 - 28. The beginning class focusses on building basic foundational skills -- no tumbling experience necessary. The intermediate class will reinforce and grow foundational skills and help participants move confidently through difficult skills including connecting multiple tumbling skills. Participants must register with the instructor in advance. Please contact Michelle at 907-529-9766 or mkeinak@gmail.com.



Community Rec is also excited to announce that the **Inlet Winds Community Band** is restarting this spring -- in early February to be exact! The band will be led by director Eric Simonsen and assistant director Mary Simonsen. The program they have selected consists of some of the director’s favorite pieces for concert band that are fun and exciting to play. Rehearsals are on Mondays February through April, culminating in a community performance on Saturday, April 13th. To sign up, **[complete an online form](#)** prior to February 6, 2023 to indicate your interest so that Mary and Eric can prepare the sheet music for you prior to the first rehearsal. If you are unable to access the form, you may sign-up at the first rehearsal.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

TOY DRIVE

'Tis the season of giving, and this year, we're on a mission to ignite joy in the hearts of even more Homer families! Join us for the Champions for Children Toy Drive, a spectacular event brought to you by the partnership of the Homer Police Department and the Homer Chamber of Commerce.

Be part of the magic by generously contributing toys and sporting goods. The spirit of giving knows no bounds, and you can drop off your donations at HPD, the Chamber, or any of our designated locations throughout Homer.

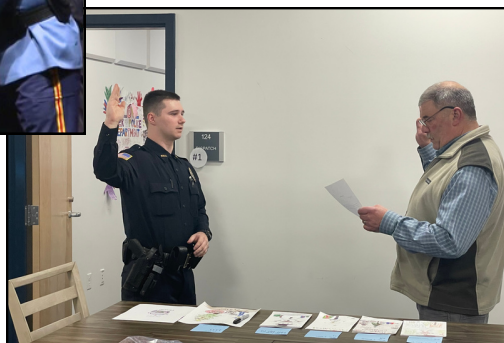
Ensure your donations reach us by December 10th so we can spread the cheer just in time for the most wonderful time of the year! Let's make this holiday season one for the books!

OFFICER BORDNER GRADUATES LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING ACADEMY

We are pleased to announce that Bradley Bordner graduated from the Alaska Law Enforcement Training academy on Friday November 17. Bradley was hired on to the police force in July. As a graduating recruit, he successfully completed more than 1,000 hours of training over the course of 16 weeks of basic Alaska Law Enforcement Training. Schooling included intensive instruction in law enforcement-related topics, physical fitness, and many scenario-based exercises designed to prepare entry-level police officers for successful careers in Alaska law enforcement. Congratulations Bradley!



At left: Bradley receiving his certificate of completion from the Alaska Law Enforcement Training Academy



At right: Police Chief Robl swearing Officer Bradley in.

A colorful poster for the 'Champions for Children Toy Drive'. At the top left is the logo for the Homer Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center. At the top right is the City of Homer Alaska seal. The text 'CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN' is in a red, curved font above the large, bold words 'TOY DRIVE' in black and red. Below this, it says 'Help make this holiday season brighter for families in need of a little extra support.' and 'Donate new and unwrapped toys or sporting goods by December 10th.' It then lists 'DROP OFF LOCATIONS' as 'Homer Police Station | 625 Grubstake Ave' and 'Homer Chamber | 201 Sterling Hwy', with a website 'www.homer.alaska.org' for more locations. The bottom of the poster features a festive illustration of a green and red toy train on a snowy path with evergreen trees. The phone number '907-235-7890' is in the bottom right corner.

FIRST RESPONDERS CLASS

First responders are always on the front lines supporting the community through risky and often traumatic situations. After their work is done, however, some emotions that can be hard to deal with, can linger. Homer Police Department sponsored a class on Saturday, November 18 for all first responders in our area to train emergency responders on how to deal with that emotional trauma.

The class covered important topics for responders on how to cope with and prevent Stress, Burnout and PTSD. The class was taught by Lisa Schmitter from Aurora Counseling and Consultation. Lisa is trained to help businesses and organizations educate, process, and understand trauma. She has worked as a mental health consultant for Head Start, the police, state troopers, schools, and fire departments.

November Anniversaries

Thanks to the following staff members for your dedication, commitment and service to the City and to the taxpayers of Homer!

Mark Robl	Police	39 Years
Bryan Hawkins	Port	24 Years
Todd Cook	Public Works	14 Years
Sean Perry	Police	9 Years
Mike Zelinski	Public Works	9 Years
Josh Mershon	Port	4 Years
Regina Johanos	Library	3 Years
Jenna Luchaco	Public Works	2 Years
Del Masterhan	Port	2 Years
Matt Dominquez	IT	1 Year

EMPLOYEE HIGH FIVE!

Ralph Skorski, Homer’s Water Meter Technician, recently became certified as a Level 2 Waste Water Collections Technician. To earn this certificate, Ralph completed a college-level class from California State University, Sacramento, had earned the required number of years of job experience and passed a rigorous examination.



Ralph’s commitment to continuing education enhances his ability to provide excellent public service, and helps the City comply with AK Department of Environmental Conservation requirements for maintaining qualified staff; that is, the ADEC requires municipalities of a certain size to maintain a staff with specified levels of certification. Congratulations and thank you Ralph!

MEET CITY STAFF

Lori Pond began working as the Assistant to the City Manager in October. We are happy to have her on board!



She recently moved to Homer from South Carolina to be closer to family. Lori’s background is in banking, financial planning, and human resources. Outside of work she enjoys ballroom dancing, hiking, baking, gardening, and home improvement projects. “Homer has always felt like home. I am so happy to finally live here. Everyone has been so welcoming and I look forward to learning more about this special corner of the world.”

Farewell

We wish a fond farewell to Public Works Director/City Engineer Jan Keiser who will be retiring in January. Jan, was raised on the Kenai Peninsula, received engineering degrees from the University of Alaska and served as Homer’s first City Engineer in the early 1980’s.



After leaving to pursue a law degree she says she “got seduced by the weather” and lived in the Seattle area for about 35 years. She’d frequently return to Homer to visit her mother and step-dad, Connie and Bob Creal.

Luckily for Homer, in early 2020, Jan saw and responded to the advertisement for the Public Works Director position and accepted the job. Jan moved back with her husband, Kim Zook, and started working for the City in March 2020.

In her tenure since coming back, Jan has advanced water-sewer utility expansion and sidewalk and trail improvements on major Homer roads and to new subdivisions. One of Jan’s favorite projects has been to develop Homer’s Green Infrastructure Storm Water Management System, which involves using native wetlands and peatlands to remove sediment, hydrocarbons and other contaminants from storm water. She’s been instrumental in creating the Kachemak Sponge and Bunnell Avenue Green Infrastructure Storm Water Management Projects. Upon her retirement, Jan and her husband will take what she calls “an epic retirement trip” to watch whales in Mexico. After returning to their Homer home, Jan expects to get involved with various non-profit organizations that support missions she cares about.

CITY OF HOMER ROSTER

Mayor - Ken Castner (2024)

City Council

Donna Aderhold (2024)

Jason Davis (2025)

Shelley Erickson (2024)

Storm P. Hansen (2025)

Rachel Lord (2026)

Caroline Venuti (2026)

City Staff Leadership

Rob Dumouchel, City Manager

Melissa Jacobsen, MMC, City Clerk/Deputy Director of Administration

Mark Robl, Chief of Police

Bill Jirsa, Chief Technology Officer

Julie Engebretsen, Economic Development Manager

Elizabeth Walton, Finance Director

Mark Kirko, Fire Chief

Dave Berry, Library Director

Andrea Browning, Personnel Director

Bryan Hawkins, Port Director

Jan Keiser, Public Works Director/City Engineer

Ryan Foster, City Planner

Mike Illg, Community Recreation Manager

Commissions and Boards

ADA Advisory Board

Economic Development Advisory Commission

Library Advisory Board

Parks, Art, Recreation and Culture Advisory Commission

Planning Commission

Port and Harbor Advisory Commission

MUNICIPAL ART COLLECTION



Old Homer Fire Station, housed upstairs in the current fire station.

This watercolor was painted by Toby Tyler.

Learn more about the municipal art collection at:

[www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/
prac/city-homer-municipal-art-collection](http://www.cityofhomer-ak.gov/prac/city-homer-municipal-art-collection)

STAY CONNECTED TO CITY COUNCIL

Go to cityofhomer-ak.gov/cityclerk/stay-connected-city-council to find instructions on how to listen, provide testimony, and participate in the meetings via Zoom.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Please note: Homer City Council will not be meeting in December. Their next regularly scheduled meeting is January 8, 2024

December

6 5:30 pm	Planning Commission Worksession
6 6:30 pm	Planning Commission Regular Meeting
13 5:30 pm	Port & Harbor Advisory Commission Regular Meeting
19 5 pm	Library Advisory Board Regular Meeting

In observance of the Christmas and New Year holidays, City of Homer offices will be closed Monday, Dec 26th and Monday, Jan 2nd.

We extend best wishes to all for a safe and happy holiday season.

JOIN OUR TEAM

- Find current job listings for the City of Homer
- Sign up for Job Alerts
- Apply Online at: cityofhomerak.applicantpro.com/jobs

CURRENT JOB LISTINGS

[Assistant or Associate Planner](#)

[Firefighter/ Basic Emergency Responder or Firefighter/ALS EMT/ Driver Operator or Fire Captain/ ALS EMT](#)



ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

The City of Homer Newsletter is published monthly. For questions or comments, please contact the Office of the City Manager at citymanager@ci.homer.ak.us.

City of Homer

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