



## City of Homer

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### Memorandum 19-110

TO: Mayor Castner and Homer City Council  
FROM: Katie Koester, City Manager  
DATE: August 21, 2019  
SUBJECT: Follow-up to July 22 HERC1 Worksession

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The following questions were posed during the July 22 Worksession on the HERC1 building with answers provided by staff. It may also be fruitful for Council to consider a site visit to the HERC2 to understand the facility and operational needs of the Public Works Building Maintenance division.

#### **Can we keep the gym and demo the rest of the facility (at what cost)?**

This would be a costly option but it is possible, although the City would have to keep a portion of the upstairs because this is where the gym's ventilation system and boiler room are located. This would require the construction of a new exterior wall in order to keep the building mechanical systems functional. Additionally, this option does not alleviate the ADA access issues for the building. The HERC Task Force considered this idea at length, but rejected it due to cost and that it didn't meet the long term community needs. The gym was a standard size when built in the late 1950's, but is small by today's standards and the insulation of the gym is very poor. There may be complications in demoing part of the building while trying to preserve the rest. The cost to keep the gym and demo the majority of the classroom wing was not heavily researched – but let's say the new exterior wall and interior work alone could be \$500K or more; this does not include the cost in preserving the upstairs ventilation system or boiler room.

#### **Is putting a new building on top of the concrete foundation a cost saving option given the value of all that concrete?**

This could be a possibility, but the City would need to consult an engineer to study this option and it would also depend on what is discovered once the HERC1 was removed. It is possible to retrofit/improve existing concrete however this should not be a guiding decision point for the City since the current foundation may not be the most ideal location for the new facility and currently, what is wanted or required for the new building is unknown.

#### **What do other communities our size have for recreation centers (floor plans)?**

The HERC Task Force considered what other communities have for recreation centers however they noted many caveats/factors that influenced what each community decided to build. For example, some communities have rec centers that were funded by the State back in the day, but are now facing significant costs associated with projects like replacing the roof. It is important to note that having the State provide the primary funding for other communities' facilities may have led to the development of rec centers exceeding the communities' needs at the expense of higher maintenance/long term improvement costs. In

communities such as Cordova, Sitka and Unalaska, the government rec center is the only rec option and fees tend to be higher than the City of Homer's. The Task Force elected to focus on the Sterling community; please see the attached info page on Sterling's rec center taken from the Task Force's Final Report.

After requesting floor plans from 6 comparable communities, the City received the recreation center floor plans from Valdez, Cordova, Kenai, and Seward, which are included as attachments.

Below are a few quick sentences to describe various Alaskan recreation centers.

**Valdez** (pop. ~4,000) – the community uses other gyms in town (like the one at the community college) so the City's rec center is for non-gym related activities (ie. teen activities). There are less opportunities for arts and culture. Square footage could not be determined.

**Cordova** (pop. ~2,000) – centralized rec facility that includes a pool. Square footage could not be determined.

**Kenai** (pop. ~8,000) – the first floor of the community center is a gym with the second floor being a computer and teen space. According to Kenai Peninsula Borough assessment data, the center is 21, 175 sq ft.

**Wasilla** (pop. ~10,000) – big sports complex that includes hockey rink – proximity to Anchorage may skew perceptions of the community's need. The Mat-Su Borough assessment data did not provide square footage however the gross acreage is 59.96.

**Soldotna** (pop. ~4,500) – complex offers an Olympic sized ice rink, racquetball and wallyball courts, and a conference suite (with kitchen) capable of seating 350 guests. The City's Parks + Recreation Department is also housed within the complex. In the Spring of 2019, the City of Soldotna introduced proposition 2019-A to the voters, which would have allowed the City to acquire general obligation bonds for construction of a field house and related capital improvements (like an indoor turf field and elevated track) at the Soldotna Regional Sports Complex; the community closely voted 'no' (51.27%). According to Kenai Peninsula Borough assessment data, the center is 55,679 sq ft.

**Sterling** (pop. ~5,500) – facility that is not used to capacity, which may result from the neighboring city (Soldotna) pulling local users away. According to Kenai Peninsula Borough assessment data, the center is 12, 041 sq ft.

**Seward** (pop. ~3,000) – teen & youth center; teen rec room; and outdoor recreation opportunities that require green space. According to Kenai Peninsula Borough assessment data, the center is 12,757 sq ft.

### **Can we move building maintenance into HERC 1 upstairs as a temporary measure? What about into the old police station?**

No, Building Maintenance cannot move into the HERC1 on a temporary basis. After informally discussing this option with the State Fire Marshal, moving the Building Maintenance division into HERC1 triggers required code updates including the installation of a sprinkler system and probably replacing the deteriorating roof.

Moving Building Maintenance into the old police station will require hiring an architect or engineer to determine what City departmental uses could be supported by the building in its current state, what retrofitting would be required to do so, and the associated costs. This move will also trigger Fire Marshal

review of the building's occupancy/use change. The police station is a much newer, much smaller structure, so the expenses should not be as large as the HERC1 expenses. A memo discussing proposed uses of the Old Police Station can be brought before Council at a later date if requested, however below lists some initial pros and cons of this building's use.

#### *Initial Police Station Pros & Cons*

##### Pros

Already owned

Close to other city facilities

Outdoor space is more than what Building Maintenance currently has at HERC2

Could support Building Maintenance while the City figures out the new recreation site/new Public Works facility

##### Cons

New costs of operations in police station

Renovations

Fire marshal input required since this would be a different use of the building

Fire Department has expressed interest in using the site

#### **Policy Considerations:**

Addressing the needs and future plans for the deteriorating HERC buildings requires future discussion by City Council. At the July 22 Worksession, a two pronged approach was proposed in the "Five Year Operating and Capital Costs for the HERC 1" spreadsheet. Funding a demolition study of the HERC1 (estimated at \$35,000) as a first step can assist Council in answering the following four options raised at the Worksession:

(1) Keep the gym and portion of the upstairs that has the ventilation system and boiler, and demolish everything else;

(2) Keep the concrete foundation to refurbish and demolish everything else; and

(3) Demolish all of HERC1, including the concrete foundation.

(4-Optional) Evaluate demolition process and costs for HERC2. Given the selected firm will already be visiting the site for HERC1, this could be a cost saving measure for the City, however it would increase the estimated cost of the study.

#### *Enclosures:*

Nov. 2018 HERC Task Force Final Report Appendix Excerpt – Sterling Community Center

Valdez, Cordova, Kenai, and Seward Rec Center Floor Plans

"Five Year Operating and Capital Costs for the HERC 1" spreadsheet