



City of Homer

www.cityofhomer-ak.gov

491 East Pioneer Avenue
Homer, Alaska 99603

(p) 907-235-8121
(f) 907-235-3140

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2 July 1, 2020

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4 Office of the Governor

5 P.O. Box 110001

6 Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001

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8 RE: Request for State Consultation in Developing Homer-specific COVID-19 Mitigation
9 Plan

10 Dear Governor Dunleavy,

11 The City of Homer thanks you and your administration for early implementation of
12 statewide health mandates in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that minimized the
13 number of illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths in Alaska. The early action allowed
14 hospitals and state agencies to prepare, municipal incident command teams and
15 emergency operations centers (EOCs) to establish, essential and other businesses and
16 organizations to develop and implement operational plans, and Alaska residents to
17 develop an understanding of the novel coronavirus and methods to maintain personal
18 and community safety and health.

19 Since state health mandates were lifted during May as part of the Reopen Alaska
20 Responsibly plan, Homer's City Council and EOC have become alarmed by the outbreak
21 of cases in our city and elsewhere on the southern Kenai Peninsula for which Homer
22 serves as a hub. The southern Kenai Peninsula accounts for 2% of Alaska's population,
23 but carries 10% of the State's COVID-19 cases. Recently, Homer's infection rate was
24 three times that of Anchorage, initiated by an outbreak that followed gatherings during
25 Memorial Day weekend.

26 Since the start of the pandemic in Alaska, Homer's EOC has successfully coordinated
27 access to resources to implement mitigation mandates and managed a robust area-
28 wide public information campaign with positive messaging about methods to protect
29 our community through a variety of media including messaging on lighted signs along
30 major roadways. Yet, out of state travelers are entering our city and not abiding by
31 mandates to test and/or quarantine. Large gatherings have occurred in which
32 participants do not maintain physical distance or wear masks. Individuals choose to

33 not wear masks when shopping at local businesses and sometimes become highly
34 agitated when asked by a business to wear a mask.

35 Because of the current outbreak in our area, Homer’s public library remains largely
36 closed to the public, though many in our community rely on the library for computer
37 and internet access. The city continues to implement measures to safely open other city
38 buildings (such as City Hall and Harbormaster’s Office) but is reluctant to unnecessarily
39 expose city employees to infection.

40 As a first class city, Homer does not have health powers and cannot implement a city-
41 wide mitigation plan on our own. The Department of Health and Social Services has
42 made it clear through the Reopen Alaska Responsibly process that you are willing to
43 work with individual communities to support local mitigation needs. Homer’s City
44 Council requests that you assign staff to consult with city staff and unified command
45 team members (including South Peninsula Hospital and Homer-based state public
46 health nurses) to develop a Homer-specific mitigation plan that you can issue on our
47 behalf. Such a plan will provide the City of Homer the flexibility to respond when the
48 local situation worsens but State COVID-19 metrics and mitigation approach remain
49 unchanged.

50 As you and your staff have wisely said many times, “open is not over.” In Homer we are
51 open and the pandemic is definitely not over! We want Homer to remain open for our
52 local businesses and our residents and visitors to move around our city as freely as
53 possible while looking out for each other’s health and safety. We need the state’s
54 support in developing a mitigation plan. Together we will make a difference.

55 CITY OF HOMER

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Ken Castner, Mayor

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62 Enclosures: City of Whittier COVID 19 Recovery Plan; City of Seward COVID 19
63 Recovery Plan; Code Orange Rules

64 cc: Adam Crum, Commissioner, Department of Health and Social Services
65 Dr. Anne Zink, Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health and Social Services

- 66 Derotha Ferraro, PIO, South Peninsula Hospital
- 67 Lorne Carroll, Public Health Nurse, Homer Public Health Center