



MEMORANDUM

Ordinance 23-49, An Ordinance of the City Council of Homer, Alaska Amending Homer City Code Title 2, Chapters 2.32 Departments and Board, 2.44 Department of Administration, 2.48 Public Library, and Enacting Chapters 2.46 Department of Information Technology and 2.57 Department of Community Development. City Manager.

Item Type: Backup Memorandum
Prepared For: Mayor Castner and Homer City Council
Date: 18 July 2023
From: Rob Dumouchel, City Manager

Since arriving in Homer, I have been looking for opportunities to modify the organization in ways that would better integrate teams, better carry out the will of the Council, provide a more transparent view of City operations, and increase the organization's effectiveness at providing services to the City's residents, businesses, and visitors. Over the last three years I have observed how my staff interacts with each other, how our systems work (or don't work) well with each other, and the gaps between where we are as a City right now and where we're aspiring to be as we go through a phase of growth and transformation as a community. I previewed the general vision back in March 2022 at the Council Visioning work sessions, and I have been piloting the proposed changes in the meantime. There have been some changes over time as I tested out the different combinations of divisions and departments. This memo provides a high level overview of the multiple actions that I am proposing which will require Council approval due to their impact on Homer City Code.

As to why I'm bringing an employee organization issue to the Council, it's because a change in code is required to officially create a department. As City Manager I can hire/fire, move employees from one department to another, and create any number of different reporting hierarchies between employees. What I cannot do without Council is officially create a department, and all of our departments (Administration, Finance, Police, Volunteer Fire, Port & Harbor, and Public Works) are defined in Homer City Code. Regarding the creation of any other departments, at this time, I don't believe that any other present division(s) are ripe for elevation to department status. Therefore, I am bringing forward three departmental proposals: IT, Library, and Community Development.



1 - Proposed organizational structure – green denotes new department or proposed future division

Move #1: Creation of a Library Department and an IT Department

In early 2021, I combined the Library and IT Divisions under the leadership of the Library Director. This has been a very successful experiment. Originally I wanted to spin these Divisions out of the Administration Department and keep them together as a new department. That proposal created some controversy and resistance from the Library Advisory Board. In the time since it was introduced, we've had some significant changes in personnel and culture within the IT Division. At this time I am much more comfortable creating standalone departments for each Division. From a management perspective, I'm still going to keep these Departments closely aligned because of the benefits that can be generated when they work with each other.

Move #2: Creation of a Community Development Department

I believe that Homer is poised for significant growth, development, and redevelopment that will have impacts on daily life in Homer, and we need a future-focused department that can take on the challenges this transformative change will have on the community together.

Creating a Community Development Department will bring together planning, economic development, building & code enforcement, and community recreation under one director. This will help focus development in Homer, while also ensuring quality of life programming is integrated into our community's growth. In anticipation of creating a Community Development Department, I created an Economic Development Division and designated an Economic Development Manager in March 2022. That move has been successful and well received by Council, staff, the Economic Development Commission, and external stakeholders. Some elements housed in the Parks Division related to tasks like park & trail planning, beautification, invasive species mitigation, and volunteer coordination have also transferred into Economic Development. We are beginning to lay the groundwork for the creation of a Building & Code Enforcement Division. The special projects team submitted a grant applications to support the adoption and implementation of a building code within the City and it has been selected for further review by FEMA. Community Recreation will benefit from having a dedicated director and additional staff support from the other divisions within Community Development.

Future consideration: Merge the Finance Department into Administration

The integration of Finance into an Administration Department is a common arrangement in cities across the country that have Administrative Services departments. I've been piloting a framework in which Administration and Finance are much more integrated. It has been successful in some ways and faced challenges in others. I want to continue to dial in that concept before I consider bringing an ordinance to Council that would merge the departments.

Fiscal Considerations: The re-organization plan, as proposed, is expected to create very little direct financial impact. The Human Resources Division, with help from the Finance Department, analyzed the changes and expects that we'll see an impact of approximately \$3500 per year between FY24 and FY25. Where the re-organization has more of a financial benefit is in that it makes each department's budget and spending more transparent while also giving the new department heads increased purchasing authority under the procurement manual which streamlines operations.

Staff Recommendation: Introduce/adopt ordinance creating Library, IT, and Community Development Departments.