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City Manager
Robert J. Mawson



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MEMORANDUM

Date: 30 April 2022
To: Honorable Mayor and City Council
From: Robert J Mawson, City Manager
Subject: Monthly Council Report

Municipal Strategic Plan

As I mentioned in my previous report, I came to Dillingham to help cultivate the type of municipal environment where people enjoy working together to make their community an even better place to live, work and visit.

During my first weekend here, we kicked off a Strategic Planning effort, designed to provide some focus and help structure our efforts to more effectively address some of the most important issues facing the City of Dillingham. During our discussions that weekend, the Council established six Strategic Initiatives.

As our discussions continued, each of the Strategic Initiatives were broken down into a few major components, to further define the work that needs to be accomplished. Individual Council and Staff members were assigned lead roles so that each Initiative and Major Component had someone to “shepherd” the effort.

The ball was then passed to me to continue the process by refining the Initiatives, along with its component Projects, Outcomes and Tasks. I was also asked to work with each Department Manager to discuss Internal Improvements that could be made in their respective areas of responsibilities.

I started by reviewing and pondering the six Initiatives established by Council, with the hope of refining their descriptions into more actionable expressions of our overall goals for the City, which I believe I was able to do. The six Initiatives are:

- Right Size and Balance the Municipal Budget
- Optimize Existing Revenues
- Develop New Sources of Revenues
- Improve Staff Retention and Recruitment Efforts
- Initiate Monthly Community Stakeholder Gatherings
- Develop and Implement a 5-year Capital Improvement Plan

Once the descriptions of the six Initiatives had been finalized, I began working on defining the major elements, or projects, associated with each. Then, each project was broken down further into outcomes and in some cases, I was able to go to the next level and establish a task or two.

While I was working on refining the six Initiatives, I also met with each Department Manager to discuss their portion of the FY22 Assessment of City Services, and their ideas for internal service or programmatic improvement projects.

On Tuesday, May 3rd, we will take our next step by meeting with our strategic planning consultant, Bill Dann of Professional Growth Systems, to refine our department projects and participate in training for the on-line project management program, specifically designed to track initiatives, projects, outcomes, and tasks associated with organizational goals and objectives. This software program will allow our staff and Council to manage their various roles and responsibilities in a shared, real-time environment.

After the department projects are refined, it will be up to each department manager to establish associated outcomes and tasks, then consider who will be the best person to accomplish each identified component and complete the project.

April Activities and Actions

Department Meetings and Site Visits

- My efforts to get around to each department location and meet each of our City staff continued in April.
- On April 20th, we held our first all-staff meeting at the Senior Center. I appreciate Ida and her staff for hosting the meeting, which was well attended. We took a few minutes for each person there to introduce themselves, discuss their responsibilities, and mention a few things going on in their respective areas that they thought were important for the rest of us to know. I introduced myself to everyone also and took my turn mentioning things going on in the City that I thought were important for our staff to be aware of, answered any questions they had, and discussed a little about my approach to city management. We will continue meeting in this fashion on a monthly basis to participate in various training activities, share department and project information, express ideas and thoughts about municipal matters, and just get to know each other better.

Legislative Activities

- Chris Hladick and I continue to focus our efforts on seeking funding and partnerships to accomplish some of our more important capital projects. Chris has also submitted a report of his activities that is included in the Council packet.
- On April 11th and 12th, Chris Hladick and I attended Senator Murkowski's Infrastructure Symposium in Anchorage, and the follow-up meeting coordinated by the Alaska Municipal League. We had several discussions with federal and state agency representatives and Chris introduced me to many attendees while we were there. Attendance was near, if not over, a thousand people. It was a valuable opportunity for me, for several reasons.

- I also took the opportunity to visit with some of our consultants and associates while I was there. I was able to meet with our Auditors, Attorneys, Engineers, and the Grant-writing firm were working with through a grant from the BBEDC.

Grant-writing

- In conjunction with the development of a more comprehensive Capital Project list, I have also been working on a potential funding source spreadsheet to help focus our grant-writing efforts.
- Our internal grant-writing capacity is still in the organizational phase, but making progress. It's been hard to push this effort along with the other demands on our plate at the moment. It is an important component to our future success and needs to be given some priority.
- We have also engaged PNG Engineers, who worked on our harbor float project, to put an application together for the Maritime Administration, Port Improvement Project funding cycle. The application is due on May 16th, so we have a short fuse, but with PNG's familiarity with the project, I believe we can get it done.

Regional Coordination, Community & Economic Development

- I continue participating in weekly Community Health / COVID Response coordination meeting held virtually with regional health providers and local governments.
- Mayor Ruby and I did meet with the First Chief and Administrator of the Curyung Tribe on April 6th. It was a very good meeting and hopefully set the table for some collaborative projects going forward.
- Patty, Chris Maines and I attended a pre-construction coordination meeting at the Nushagak offices, where the upcoming waste-heat line installation project was discussed. This line will be installed to serve the schools with heat, reducing the need for a stand-alone boiler system. It looks like a win-win for the schools and Nushagak.
- I participated in the Alaska Economic Developers monthly call, where the state-wide CEDS project was discussed.
- I also participated in economic development discussions with BBNA and BBEDC.
- I was able to attend a few segments of the Bristol Bay Leadership Conference, via ZOOM. I wanted to participate more, but other responsibilities needed my attention most of the time. Mayor Ruby took notes and shared them with me, which I appreciate. I believe there will also be recordings and presentations made available at a later date.

Human Resources

- In addition to the day-to-day human resources paperwork that we process, Kelsa and I continue our discussions on potential procedural / policy amendments to address identified gaps. We have also done quite a bit to address some organizational ideas and staffing needs.
- We also began our discussions with both Local 71 and the PSEA Union's representatives to negotiate the next 3-year Collective Bargaining Agreement. Our current agreement expires on June 30th.

City Clerk

- Lori made arrangements to have representatives of the Record Information Management System for the State of Alaska visit our offices during April. They made a presentation to our department managers, and some additional staff members, on the first morning and then proceeded to visit each department over the next three days. They reviewed our

processes for record retention and record retention and will be providing recommendations to assist us in making improvements and dealing with difficult issues like retention of digital records. I thought they did an excellent job and were very helpful. I appreciate Lori for putting this visit together.

Finance

- Preparations for the FY23 Budget continue. We had our first meeting with the Finance and Budget Committee and will meet with them again on Monday, May 9th. We had a good discussion with the Committee and feel like our goals for the FY23 budget are lining up.
- Challenges continue with staffing, as we lost another employee in Finance. The remaining staff are working hard to cover the gaps and additional assistance from temporary personnel and consultants are helping as well.

Planning

- I continue to research and discuss numerous planning activities, both past and present, to get a handle on where we are and what we need to do. We have been working to upgrade the computer system in the planning office to match the needs and run the software that allows us to carry out assignments.
- I also continue to visit various properties and sites within the City to better understand the lay of the land and some of the physical challenges we are facing.
- How the City manages its properties is also one of my main concerns. Once we get a handle on the properties we have, and how those properties are held, we can determine the best ways to put those properties to work and how they can benefit some short and long range goals for the community.

Public Works

- The challenges in Public Works continue, with equipment and manpower needs, but we are trying to chip away at them. We continue discussing short and long-term needs for equipment, facilities, and infrastructure improvements so we can make some accommodations in the FY23 budget. The development of a solid Capital Improvement Plan will help us better address these needs.
- The Harbor crew is now fully engaged and preparing for the upcoming fishing season, which is quickly approaching.
- The Dock is also fully engaged and has already seen one cargo ship come and go. We have had some issues with both large forklifts, which have compromised our ability to transfer cargo off the dock, but one was made to run last Friday and we are awaiting parts for the smaller one now. A mechanic from Pape came and evaluated both machines and developed a list of items that need to be repaired or replaced. We will be working to address these issues as soon as we can.
- The deadline for bidding on the wastewater lagoon aeration project came and went without a single bidder. We will be discussing our next step with the project engineers soon.
- The bids for the fuel and oil contract for FY23 and FY24 also concluded with two responders. As expected, we saw a significant increase in prices for FY23. Neither bidder was comfortable submitting a bid for FY24, given the volatility of the oil market in recent months. Awarding the bid is on the agenda for the May 5th Council meeting.

Public Safety

- Chief Dan completed his service with the City of Dillingham on Friday, April 29th. His staff hosted a lunchtime retirement BBQ at the Public Safety offices in his honor. It was well attended and a good experience for all of us. We will miss him. Dan will be attending the Council meeting so the Council can formally recognize his 30-years of service to the community.
- Dan and I have had several conversations about the department going forward and the things that need to be addressed there. We have also both had several conversations with Sgt. Maines, who will be Acting Chief of Police until we can hire a permanent replacement. He and I will communicate often to keep the public safety services running smoothly. Sgt. Maines is ready and capable to step into this acting role and I have full confidence in his ability to lead the department.
- We have managed to secure one additional rotational Police Officer and one additional Corrections officer in the last week.
- We are still waiting to see if the Alaska Department of Correction's budget request will be approved by the Legislature. The request includes an increase for Contract Jails, like the one we operate here in Dillingham.

Fire and EMS

- We are meeting on Monday, May 2nd to kick off the 911 system upgrade project. This project will replace the 911 system at the Lake Road Fire Hall and upgrade the 911 system at the Public Safety building. This upgraded, redundant system will ensure a more resilient and reliable operation for many years to come.
- We have also moved forward in the replacement of the in-operable air-filling equipment at the Lake Road Fire Hall. Our existing system no longer works and is too old to be repaired and made safe to use. This will also be a grant funded project.
- Discussions continue in our planning to repair the Downtown Fire Hall after it suffered water damage to the lower level. We are still waiting for the insurance company to issue a decision on a settlement. Once we receive a confirmation on the settlement, we can make final plans. We are looking at an alternate site to operate from this summer, so we don't have to rush the repairs or reoccupy the fire hall before its ready. One thought is to operate out of the vacant building down at the Harbor. It is not far from the fire hall and would keep response times lower than responding from the Lake Road station.
- The Agreement to lease one of our ambulances to the Hospital is also on the agenda for Council consideration. The hospital is currently utilizing the vehicle under an administrative, short-term MOU that expires on May 15th, unless extended or replaced by the proposed long-term lease agreement.
- We did make one offer to a candidate for seasonal EMT and hope to bring on one or two more.

Library

- I continue to attend the monthly Library Advisory Board meetings to discuss current operations and discuss potential improvements to the operations and facilities associated with the Library system.
- The effort to establish and staff a Volunteer Program that can assist in various library operations, assist with activities, and perhaps increase the number of hours our library is open each week is making progress.

- Additional policies, to address requests by the State Library System, are also being discussed. These include the process to challenge any portion of the Library collection that someone may deem inappropriate or offensive. There are several efforts nationwide to remove materials from Libraries and Schools and we need to make sure we have a policy in place to address such a request. Our City Attorneys will be working on this and we will bring something back to Council for consideration.

Senior Center

- We are currently working on a re-opening plan. The entry doors are still not fixed, so we can welcome our Elders back in person. Koolie and I have looked at the doors and have a plan to get them operational. We hope to have them working very soon.
- Again, I want to thank Ida and her staff for hosting our first all-staff meeting on April 20th. They rushed to get their meals completed, packaged and out for delivery prior to our meeting. They also set up to accommodate the crowd we assembled that day.
- We plan on moving our meeting around each month so we are not placing a burden on any one department and to give everyone a break from their typical surroundings.