

Mayor
Alice Ruby

Acting City Manager
Jack Savo Jr.



Dillingham City Council
Bertram Luckhurst
Michael Bennett
Steven Carriere
Curt Armstrong
Kaleb Westfall

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 25, 2025
To: Jack Savo Jr., Acting City Manager
From: Christopher Maines, Planning Director
Subject: August 2025 Monthly Report

Upcoming Planning Commission Activity:

The Planning Department, in collaboration with the Planning Commission, has begun work on key issues for Fiscal Year 2026. The first of which is Dillingham Streets and Roads.

Street and Road Compliance Issue

Staff has identified a significant municipal code compliance issue regarding street maintenance practices. The city currently maintains various streets without formal acceptance agreements as required by Municipal Code Sections 17.23.090 and 17.23.100, while simultaneously declining to maintain other streets such as Dragnet Drive and Squaw Creek Road. This creates inconsistent treatment of property owners and potential legal exposure.

Current Situation

Our review reveals that no city-maintained street has the required formal inspection and written acceptance documentation mandated by municipal code. The code clearly distinguishes between dedication (automatic upon plat recording) and acceptance (requiring formal city inspection and written agreement). Without following proper acceptance procedures, the city lacks legal authority for current maintenance decisions. This inconsistency affects three categories of property owners:

- Those receiving city maintenance without formal agreements
- Those denied city maintenance despite street dedications
- A theoretical third group that would have properly executed agreements (currently Waskey Road)

Legal and Financial Implications

The current approach violates established municipal code requirements and creates several risks:

- Unauthorized expenditure of city funds on streets without legal maintenance obligations
- Potential liability for refusing maintenance where legal obligations may exist
- Unequal treatment of similarly situated property owners
- Budget planning difficulties due to unclear actual responsibilities

Recommended Solution

Staff recommends a four-phase approach to resolve this compliance issue:

1. Street Inventory and Assessment (6 months): Catalog all city streets, current maintenance practices, construction standards, and legal status
2. Policy Development (3 months): Establish objective criteria and procedures for street acceptance based on code requirements
3. Community Engagement (6 months): Public notification, meetings, and input process for affected property owners
4. Ordinance Adoption (6 months): Comprehensive street maintenance ordinance with clear legal basis for all decisions

Requested Council Action

Staff requests Council direction to proceed with developing a comprehensive Street Maintenance Ordinance that brings city practices into compliance with existing municipal code. This would include conducting the necessary street inventory, establishing clear acceptance criteria, and engaging the community in developing fair, legally defensible maintenance policies.

The current system requires immediate attention to ensure legal compliance and equitable treatment of all property owners within the municipality.

Planning Department Activity:

Dillingham Community Action Plan

The Dillingham Community Action Plan will be seeing its first projects involving the Dillingham City School District. Currently a schedule is being developed for a walking satellite bus group, in which students with chaperones will be dropped off at the local harbor and walk to school in the morning. The aim is to promote healthy walking habits and aid in preventing additional traffic at the school during morning student drop-off. The second project will involve students painting the crosswalks on Seward and D Street in the official school colors and logos. The aim is to give students a sense of ownership and provide pedestrians safer crosswalks that adhere to the natural use patterns.

EPA Landfill Appropriation

Key Milestone: NEPA Process Complete

The Planning Office received news that the NEPA Process is complete and that no negative findings were found. We have received several forms that need to be updated on account of the extended delay. The new project start date will be slated for September 1, 2025. We are hoping to have our grant agreement in place before the start of the federal calendar year. I will keep the council posted on updates as they become available.

EPA Brownfields Inventory Grant

There are no updates to report this month. Regular updates on project status and milestones will be provided to the council as work progresses through the coming months.

Benthic GeoScience

I met with David Oliver with Benthic GeoScience on August 19th, 2025. He is currently conducting a feasibility study for a fiberoptic line that is proposed to cross from Kanakanak Beach across the Nushagak River. The meeting was purely informational and I will update the Council as more information is available.

Rural Professional Housing Grant Application

The Planning Department has successfully submitted the City of Dillingham's pre-application to the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) for the Rural Professional Housing Grant program. This competitive annual funding initiative is specifically designed to create affordable rental housing for essential rural professionals, including teachers and healthcare workers who are critical to our community's well-being and economic stability.

I will be attending the training on this application on September 3, 2025. The course is all day and will be held in Anchorage. As a cost savings I have elected to attend remotely.