

Mayor's Report

General Meeting January 16, 2023 (Drafted for 1/11/23 deadline)

Through the December/January holiday period we focused on keeping basic functions going including progress on several continuing projects and planning of work for spring and summer.

1. Good River Bridge Repairs Project. The Good River Bridge was constructed in 1984 by the State of Alaska and has served the community well for nearly four decades. State inspection reports in 2015 and 2021 identified age-related deterioration of some non-critical structural members such as guard rail posts, abutment timber lagging, and running planks. The approach embankment at the northwest corner of the bridge is also being eroded by a side stream entering Good River at that location. The City's consultant PND Engineers evaluated the bridge and inspection report and generated a list of needed repairs and options for dealing with the slumping embankment. None of the deficiencies are yet critical to the safety of the bridge to carry its design loads but the City intends to maintain the bridge as a responsible owner to serve safely for many more decades.

The City is searching for infrastructure grant funding to accomplish repairs. In the process we met by video link with the Alaska DOT bridge engineers. They have offered to develop a project application for Federal and/or State funding to make structural repairs to the timber bridge. The recommendations of the State bridge engineers differ somewhat from, and appear more costly than, those suggested by PND. However, if the State designs and manages the repairs the city would only need to contribute match funding. Further, the City would not have to manage the construction project. That said it is uncertain whether the project will qualify for State or federal funding because the bridge is still in relatively good condition. City Administrator Kathy Leary and I are meeting with our assigned project manager this week to compare the recommendations of PND and the State and determine whether to ask Dot to develop a project funding application. Kathy also is working with our grant writer to identify other funding sources.

2. SEARHC Clinic MOU. We have not had a formal response from SEARHC Clinic management regarding our proposed Memorandum of Understanding with the Clinic. I contacted Noble Johnston at SEARHC in early January and he has agreed to finish up a review with his management staff and respond. It is not certain that SEARHC will agree to complete an MOU. We continue to urge them to partner with us through the MOU to capture shared opportunities to promote health and medical services and to outline responsibilities for emergency response for the benefit of public health and safety in Gustavus.

3. Chatham School District MOU. The Gustavus Public Library sits on School- District-owned Tract A along with the Gustavus School. The library is owned, staffed, and maintained by the City of Gustavus. The city library also serves as the school library and has long contributed to learning by Gustavus students through innovative programs. It was built years before the City incorporated so there has never been a formal agreement regarding the relationship with the school district. Our Gustavus Librarians are exploring development of an MOU with Chatham School District that would describe the relationship of the Library to the School and identify means of complementing school programs with library resources. I will be working with them in the coming weeks to complete the MOU.

4. DOT MOU. The City of Gustavus has long partnered informally with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, particularly for mutual emergency response. The DOT staff have also assisted the City with some weather-related road maintenance tasks at times, such as road sanding. We value the relationship but have never had an official MOU outlining our relationship. I have begun to work with Airport Manager Jeff Jarvis to develop an MOU, which will form a basis for mutual aid.

5. Library Bike Shelter. PND completed the design work for the Library bike shelter, and I have forwarded the design to the State of Alaska Fire Marshall office for design review as required by State Code. John Barry, PE, is our assigned project manager for the construction project. He will be developing the bid documents to put out late this winter. The Council will introduce this month a non-code ordinance (NCO) to fund the project at \$40,000. Public hearing on the NCO will be scheduled for the February general meeting. We hope to construct the bike shelter during the 2023 construction season.

6. Road Maintenance—Sanding. So far this winter we have enjoyed cold weather with very little snow, so we have plowed city roads only once. However, roads have been very icy at times, especially when weather warmed with rain on the frozen surfaces. We are most grateful to DOT Airport Manager Jeff Jarvis for sanding assistance on key roads and parking areas during the first icy period. Since then, Glacier Bay Construction has acquired a sand spreader and has been sanding critical intersections and parking areas. They have a limited amount of suitable sanding material on hand, so we are trying to use it sparingly. We are thankful to Justin and Ponch Marchbanks for taking the initiative to acquire the sanding equipment and add the service to their maintenance contract work. Our roads and parking areas have been safer as a result.

7. Road Maintenance—other. Under our annual maintenance contract, we routinely order special small road improvement projects. This coming construction season we plan to improve turnarounds at the ends of Porcupine St., Mary's Road, Good River Road, Extratuff Road, and to improve Glen's Ditch Road south of Same Old Road to enable snow plowing service. We also plan to provide some form of bull rails or guard rails over the Mountain View Road ditch at Veneta and Owen to reduce the crossing hazards over those culverts.

We expect to contract larger projects to extend ditches north along Wilson Road and to provide ditches and culverts along portions of Same Old Road to control and prevent flooding of those roads in heavy rain events.

These projects will make permanent improvements to our roads, improving safety and maintainability and reducing flood risk to adjacent residential properties. They will be funded from the City's capital improvement savings.

7. Heat Pump Installation for City Hall. Last year the City Council approved a project to install a heat pump system in City Hall to reduce use of fossil-fuel oil and to demonstrate the effectiveness of electrification of heating. We fortunately have an offer from a major US heat manufacturer, Mr. Cool, in Kentucky to receive for free a 36,000 Btu/hr mini-split system with two discharge units. The manufacturer wants to demonstrate the effectiveness and ease of installation of their product at our City Hall. We owe a big Thank You to Jason Custer, VP of AP&T, for establishing the contract with Mr. Cool that resulted in this kind offer. If the system performs well as we expect the City may wish to purchase more units to electrify heating in other city buildings. The Cold Climate Housing Research

Center in Fairbanks has expressed interest in including our City Hall system in their evaluation of heat pump systems at various locations in Alaska. We are to participate in that research. Finally, once installed, City Hall will qualify for the \$500 heat pump installation incentive payment from AP&T. The Mr. Cool unit is designed for do-it-yourself installation with pre-charged, quick-connect lines. Salmon River Electric will wire power to the heat pump location on the east side of City Hall. Dean Weikle and I plan to do the installation to see how easy it is to do.

8. Softball Field special use permit. The City's permit application for continuing community use of the site on the airport lease lot next to the US Post Office for a softball field is working its way through the DOT&PF approval process. It has been approved by the FAA and our DOT contact expects the permit to be in place by summer.

9. Marine Facilitator hire. We are preparing a job announcement to fill the Marine Facilities Coordinator position with expectation to post the opening in early February. We may make a few changes to the job description to expand work scope as we have used the Coordinator for other city-maintenance tasks, particularly at the Beach and Salmon River Parks.

10. Gravel Pit Operating Model. Gravel is an essential building material for any growing community and the City Gravel Pit resource has been vital for Gustavus. Our existing model relies on permitted contractors to source gravel from assigned pits using excavators. But that method is incapable of excavating the full gravel resources at depth in the ponds. The easily-excavated material is nearing its end and there may be only two years or so of material left by the current method. The City needs to develop a plan to change excavation method to make the full resource on the city-owned pit area available. On January 10, City Administrator Kathy Leary and I met with two of the contractors who draw gravel from the City Gravel Pit to advance a plan for a different operating model. The City will ramp up its effort to find grant funding for either a suction dredge or a crane capable of pulling gravel from depth across the full areas of the ponds. The City will likely need to own and operate the extraction equipment or may contract out the actual operation of city-owned equipment. We have included a request for funding in our annual application to the State Legislature this year.

11. City Park and Building Flower Planting for Summer 2023. Flowers brighten up summer for Alaskan towns and for visitors. Our effort last summer for the Salmon River Park and other City facilities was applauded. I am pleased that Meadow Brook and Ann Wildman have agreed to take leadership again this year for acquiring plants and hanging baskets to dress up the Salmon River Park, City Hall, Library, Community Chest, and welcome signs for this summer. In our work session last week council members indicated support for spending up to \$1500 for the flower bed plantings and hanging baskets at those sites. Meadow and Ann are checking on pricing and availability of the materials. Our intent is to have the beds planted and the baskets in place earlier this year, than last, so they will be in full glory before the Fourth of July. Thank you, Meadow and Ann, for your leadership toward making Gustavus look its best this summer!