

Mayor's Report—March 14, 2022 General Meeting
(prepared 3/9/22 and may be updated before 3/14/22)

Covid-19 Outbreak and Risk Assessment. Early March has seen an unfortunate outbreak of Covid-19 with community spread. As of March 8, 2022, the Gustavus Emergency Operations Center at the Firehall has confirmed twelve cases through City testing and those results have been reported to the State Department of Health and Human Services for their official tally. Cases identified only through unofficial home testing are not counted or reported but some patients have come to the Firehall for confirmation tests. Unofficial reports in social media and via email suggest the outbreak may total over two dozen cases. The outbreak, which was first identified in testing at the Gustavus School has spread beyond school families in recent days. Patients have been advised to prevent further spread by quarantining for five days after the positive test and follow that with strict mask use around other people for another five days. We wish a prompt recovery with no lingering effects for all affected community members. Please be considerate and supportive of those dealing with illness and of those among us who may be at elevated risk during the pandemic.

On May 6, I wrote my monthly community covid-19 risk assessment for the Council March work session as required by Resolution CY 22-01. I updated it on May 7 just before that evening's work session to acknowledge the new case reports that day. A copy of the report is included in the General Meeting packet. The report concluded that the City should try to keep city facilities open and operating for public business during the present outbreak by applying protective measures including masking indoors, to reduce the probability of illness transmission to staff, volunteers, and others using our facilities. However, with 8 more cases confirmed and posted Monday 3/7, the Library would be closed for 72 hours—i.e., through Thursday 3/10—per its approved protocol. We should reassess the masking requirement for our facilities when the outbreak has ended, and the risk of transmission locally and regionally has dropped to low. *It is my intent that we maintain the masking requirement no longer than reasonably necessary.*

City Steel Float at the Dock. The Alaska DOT&PF engineering office in Juneau dispatched engineer Misty Butler, PE, to Gustavus to inspect the damage and make recommendations for preservation and ultimately repair of the float. Misty worked with Marine Facilities Coordinator Ben Sadler and Council Member Joe Vanderzanden to evaluate the float. During the visit they improved the temporary securing of the float pending its relocation to Bull Moose Cove. *We owe a big thanks to Misty, Ben, and Joe for their work to protect this valuable city asset.* We also must thank David Lowell, PE, at DOT for arrangements to move the float and schedule repairs—all on the State budget. A few days after the inspection DOT paid Melino Salvage of Juneau to come to Gustavus and tow the float to protected moorage at Bull Moose Cove. *Ben Sadler and Joe Vanderzanden were again on hand to support the work.* David is arranging for repairs to the float to be made by Western Marine when they are here in April for other state dock work. Western Marine will return the repaired float to position at the dock before the summer season. Gustavus crews under direction of Marine Facilities Coordinator Ben Sadler will move the wooden floats back into position after the steel float is back.

The storm damage demonstrated that the exposed float configuration risks damage to the steel float whenever it remains in place during winters. The City now intends to contract to move the float to safety each fall and return it to position each spring. Melino Salvage has expressed an interest in providing the service in future seasons.

The City administration now believes the best long-term solution will be some form of wave-energy absorbing barrier to protect the float area. Such a protection would also reduce wave hazards for float users during summer operations as well. DOT's David Lowell has offered to help the City scope a possible wave barrier construction project with a cost estimate suitable to seek grant funding for the improvement. We intend to file an infrastructure grant application for the project in April, if DOT has sufficient information for us in time. The project cost may be on the order of \$10 Million.

Other Infrastructure Grant Funding Opportunities. The Federal bipartisan infrastructure bill offers a wealth of grant opportunities. City Administrator Tom Williams and I have been studying the published materials and participating in webinars from the Alaska Municipal League to identify possible funding for City projects. To make the most of opportunities we will contract with a professional grant writer. Tom has been in contact with some on the AML recommendation list. We expect to complete an agreement in a few days. The two top priorities for application will be for the wave barrier and bike trail projects.

Bike Trail Project. For at least the last decade there has been strong public interest in developing a safe bike trail along our main paved road routes—from the Airport to the National Park Entry with a branch from Four Corners to the Dock. In December we submitted the bike trail project for inclusion in the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. With the advent of federal infrastructure funding the project may finally be feasible. Council members Jim Mackovjak and Kyle Bishop are working up a scope with initial cost estimate to support a grant application. They plan to have the scope ready to submit to a grant writer in a matter of days. We may need to separate the project grant application into a design phase followed by a construction phase. *Thank you Jim and Kyle for helping move us forward toward achieving a key community goal!*

Other Local Infrastructure Projects.

City-wide Hydrology Study. Tom Williams and I are working with the Alaska Department of Homeland Security to fund a hydrology study of the community to inform future road drainage projects. Federal funding may be available for such projects as climate change mitigation but will require a hydrology study be completed first. We continue to plan improvements for the Gravel Pits, Rink Creek Road, Wilson Rd, Same Old Road, and Willow Way, but their designs will likely be informed by the results of the hydrology study.

Wilson Road Culverts at Chase and ADF&G Driveway. This FEMA-funded project is awarded and on hold for spring construction conditions.

Wilson/ Rink Creek Rd Culvert Riprap. This City-funded project is awarded and on hold for spring construction conditions.

Tong Road culverts and Ditching. I am drafting an RFQ for this FEMA-funded project. Todd Boris, PE, is assisting with plans and specifications. We expect to have it out for bid in the spring. *Thanks, Todd!*

Fairweather Road Ditches and Culverts. Glacier Bay Construction (GBC) responded recently to relieve flooding from heavy rain that was plaguing the subdivision north of Fairweather Road as far as the Anglers Inn. This has been a recurring problem in recent years. GBC cut a ditch across the western driveway to the Church, which was not culverted, leaving access over their culverted eastern driveway. They cleaned the ditch as possible to improve flow to the Dock Rd ditch and eventually to the River. That drained the immediately flooded area. As soon as soil conditions allow, GBC will install two 18"x20'

culverts from City stock at the western driveway entrance and grade the ditch for an effective drainage solution. The City will later install new culverts under three more driveways and excavate a more effective ditch along the entire north side of Fairweather to complete the drainage improvement as far as Pleasant Ave. Work on the ditch east of Pleasant Ave two years ago has been effective in recent storms.

We owe a big thank you to Glacier Bay Construction for their response effort to relieve flooding of the properties north of Fairweather Rd!

City Administrator Departure. Tom Williams has submitted his resignation, with a spring departure date yet to be determined, after nearly four years of service as City Administrator. I have greatly valued Tom's work and am very sad to be losing his capable services. I understand his wish to relocate to be nearer his family in Sitka and we all wish him and his family the very best. Tom and I are reviewing the position descriptions for updating. I'll be assigning a recruitment committee soon to help me fill the open position.

PFAS Bills. Our State Senator and Representative have each sponsored bills in the legislature to deal with PFAS contamination of drinking water, and to exempt municipal fire departments from liability for past use of PFAS-containing fire suppression foams. I called in to testify in support of the senate bill during a hearing by the Senate Resources Committee. At least four other callers from Gustavus supported the bill. I am proud that Gustavus was well-represented in the support testimony. I will continue to monitor and support the bills as opportunities arise.