



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Commerce, Community,
and Economic Development

DIVISION OF COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS
Juneau Office

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Monday, November 18, 2024

Re: Gustavus Trip Report 11/05/2024 - 11/08/2024

From: Iura Leahu

Purpose of Trip: The purpose of the trip was to provide onsite training for newly elected officials, visit community sites, and meet with city staff.

Person Contacted:

Sally McLaughlin - Mayor
Kathy Leary - City Administrator
Liesl Barker - City Clerk
Ben Sadler - City Treasurer
Ian Barrier - Manager of Disposal and Recycling Center
Sol Martinez - Fire Chief

Observations: Juneau RUBA staff was invited by the City of Gustavus to provide onsite training for newly elected officials. However, the training was canceled due to several council members being unable to attend.

While in the City of Gustavus, Juneau RUBA staff met with the mayor, city administrator, city treasurer, city clerk, manager of recycle center and fire chief. The discussion with the city treasurer focused on sources of local revenue, a cautious spending approach, and potential departmental budget cuts to preserve the city's existing savings. The discussion with the city administrator were about regional governments, Hunaah petition to incorporate as a borough and pros and cons of joining a regional government by the city.

The discussions with the mayor and city clerk addressed guidelines for communication between city council members outside of public meetings, the challenges of managing city business through email exchanges, and the roles and responsibilities of council members. Additional topics included the need for a human resource hub for small towns, procedures for certifying election results, and challenges associated with enforcing laws in a specific community.

On the second day, RUBA staff met with the city clerk to discuss city business and the pros and cons of using Municode services. In the afternoon, RUBA staff and the mayor visited various public sites in the community, including the recycling center, fire department, cemetery, state ferry and city dock, and several private local businesses.

On the third day, RUBA staff visited the Gustavus Forelands Preserve, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, and its facilities. The parks provide full-time employment for several Gustavus residents and play an important role in the local economy. RUBA staff also visited the Huna Tribal House, located within the national park.

Recommendations: Based on discussions with elected officials and city staff, Juneau RUBA staff suggests the following steps to enhance city operations:

Refresh the Grievance Procedure

Work together to revise the city's grievance procedure to make it clearer and more consistent for everyone involved.

Review Email Communication Guidelines

Take some time to revisit and update the policies for email communications among council members to ensure they're effective and aligned with best practices.

Be Mindful with Email Correspondence

To avoid any confusion or unintended issues, it's a good idea for council members to refrain from discussing city business or sharing personal opinions about it via email.

Hold Regular Staff Meetings

The Mayor might consider scheduling regular meetings with staff to improve communication and keep everyone on the same page.

Focus on Water Quality

The Council could explore ways to secure dependable water sources for areas facing water quality challenges.

Clarify Rules for Collaborative Projects

It would be helpful for the Council to define clear guidelines for how members can work together on projects outside of formal meetings.

Update Policies on Conflict of Interest and Ex Parte Communication

Revisiting and refreshing policies around conflict of interest and ex parte communications could help ensure transparency and trust in council operations.

Sincerely,
Iura Leahu
Local Government Specialist 3