

Mayor's Report for April 11, 2022, General Meeting

It's been a busy month in Lake Snow-be-gone. Our fine city staff continues to make Gustavus a City to make us proud. You have had reports from many of the departments already. My focus has been on funding, developing, and executing infrastructure projects. Here is a summary for the record.

1. Break up road maintenance is always a challenge in late winter and early spring. Due to the heavy snow this winter we pushed out berms on many roads so that they would melt more off the road and not trap water on driving surfaces. That has sped drying and smoothing of roads as they thawed. It's been a useful strategy that should be applied in the future especially in heavy snow years.

2. FEMA flood recovery and mitigation funding. For 16 months, Tom Williams and I have been working through the FEMA application process to recover costs of repair of road damage due the December 2, 2020, flood. Extensively documented expenses have now been approved for payment and we expect to recover around \$100,000. While doing the repairs and ditch cleaning our contractor greatly improved ditches achieving restoring them to better than original state. Now in addition to that recovery funding, FEMA officials have offered us another \$96,000 in mitigation funding to help us prevent future flood damage to city roads and private properties that have flooded previously. We are most grateful for the assistance from FEMA officials and their support for improving our resilience in the face of continuing climate change.

3. Fairweather Road. As snow melted in areas near the beach, we began drainage improvement project work. Glacier Bay Construction a month ago excavated a ditch across the western driveway at the Gustavus Chapel, clearing a path to drain the large, flooded area north of Fairweather Road. The road embankment has tended to block rain and snow melt water from moving down slope toward the beach. Most of the driveways along Fairweather have lacked culverts. In late March the contractor installed a 40' culvert from City stock at the driveway and re-established the driveway into the church parking lot. The improved ditch and culvert are the first step of ditch improvements along the north side of Fairweather from Pleasant to Dock Road. We will continue them this year when we receive more culverts.

4. Large Culvert Riprap at Gravel Pits. Glacier Bay Construction will soon install protective rip rap at the large culvert under Wilson Road where it becomes Rink Creek Road at the Gravel Pits. The project will guard against future washout and loss of the large culvert during flood events, as nearly occurred in the August 2021 river overflow flood. With snow melt and the water level dropping we expect the work can be completed in the next few weeks. The cost of this work will be covered by a new flood mitigation grant that was offered to us this month by FEMA following the successful flood recovery work since December 2020.

5. Wilson Road Drainage Improvement. This project is the first step of an overall project to excavate and improve ditches along Wilson Road to capture and carry away flood waters during heavy rain events such as we had in December 2020. The project will replace a damaged, undersized culvert under Wilson Road at Chase Drive with a 24" diameter culvert to carry flood water from the west side of Wilson to the deep ditch on the east side and on to Glen's Ditch. The project will also extend the deep ditch on the east side of Wilson north past the ADF&G cabin and install a culvert under the ADF&G driveway. The intent is to divert any flood water on Wilson Road away from the adjacent subdivisions that were

flooded in December 2020. Glacier Bay Construction is proceeding with the project this week. Funding will be recovered via the new FEMA mitigation grant.

6. Tong Road drainage and flood recovery. This project to replace two flood-damaged culverts along Tong Road is in the design phase and I expect to have a request for quotation out in April, with funding from the FEMA flood recovery opportunity. We will eventually excavate a ditch along the north side of Tong Road from Mountain View to the Country Inn entrance driveway, which should improve driving conditions and reduce maintenance.

7. Same Old Road drainage. Last summer Glacier Bay Construction cleaned and improved a ditch along a section of Same Old Road. That work has helped keep the road dry but a damaged and plugged old culvert at the corner between Tim Sunday's and Chuck Bales' residences has blocked flow from reaching the Glens Ditch system. As soon as we can acquire a culvert for this corner, our contractor will install it to relieve ponding water at the inside of that corner. In a later phase when culverts are available, we intend to ditch the east side of that North-South road section and the south side of the East-West running section as far as End of the Trail and install culverts to improve drainage and reduce frequent flooding issues along those sections of road.

8. Stock culvert purchase. We are acquiring competitive quotes for a stock of twenty, 18" diameter culverts for use in the above planned drainage projects, most with FEMA funding.

9. Grandpa's Farm Road Bridge. The council has before it this month the award of the project to construct the Grandpa's Farm Road Bridge, replacing the badly perched culvert carrying Harry Hall Creek under the road. The award has been pending final confirmation from Washington DC of full funding of this \$535,000 project by US Fish and Wildlife Service using Infrastructure Bill funds. A week ago, Andy Stevens at US FWS notified us to expect written confirmation of the grant by April 8, so I have posted the Notice of Intent to Award and have recommended council award of the project. As this report is written Andy has assured me that funding is almost certain.

10. Good River Bridge Repairs. Last fall we contracted with PND Engineers to evaluate the Alaska DOT bridge inspection report for the Good River Bridge. This timber bridge was built in about 1985 and needs repairs to keep it fully functional and safe for decades to come. We asked for an evaluation of the bridge embankment at the northwest corner of the structure where a stream has been cutting an incised channel next to the embankment. Snow fall prevented the engineering inspection last fall, but the engineers plan to visit on April 29 and then to generate a report and recommendations for corrective action. This work is funded from our city capital improvement program.

11. Grant Funding for Major Projects. A big thank you to Tom Williams in setting up a relationship with the Solstice Alaska Consulting, a grant writing firm to help us apply for major project grants.

The first project into the process is our proposal to build a bike trail from the Airport to the Park boundary with a branch down Dock Road to the Dock. Council member Jim Mackovjak assembled a trail project history description and supporting material for the grant writer. Vice Mayor Kyle Bishop is assisting in the grant support effort and plans to coordinate with the NPS for possible funding assistance and connection to Park trails. Jim has contacted Alaska DOT&PF and received written support for development of the trail in the DOT rights-of-way. The grant writer is hoping to have an application in

to the Infrastructure RAISE grant opportunity this month. We are still determining how to structure the request for the overall planning, design, and construction phases.

The second major project is to fund construction of a wave barrier to protect our city-owned float system at the state dock. We are working first with Alaska DOT&PF to develop scope and a cost estimate for the project.

We hope also to apply for infrastructure grant funding for energy conservation and electrification projects for city buildings. We anticipate seeking funds for ventilation improvements to improve air exchange for health protection and perhaps heat pumps to replace or complement existing oil-fueled heating systems.

12. Possible parking area improvement for Golf Course trails. I began preliminary discussions with DOT to allow the city to improve parking at the small trail head on the west side of Dock Road at the boundary of the DRC tract and the former Fairweather Golf Course. The trail head parking would serve walkers using the trails on the DeBoer tract and a trail to the river on the DRC property. I expect to have a scoping document for council approval soon. It would be a relatively small project much like those completed in past years at the end of Good River Road and Dickey Drive.

13. Pandemic Risk Assessment. My monthly pandemic risk assessment for April required by Resolution CY22-01 found that pandemic risk for Gustavus and our census area has fallen substantially similarly to national trends. I concluded that it is time to transition out of our obligatory mask-wearing requirement in city buildings. I recommended the Council rescind the resolved requirements this month, while continuing to improve ventilation in our facilities and to maintain optional channels for public service delivery. Masking would become optional but encouraged for those with vulnerabilities to the virus. As we all will need to take personal responsibility for our health protection, we must be considerate and understanding of those with special needs. Let's all work together to rebuild mutually supportive relationships that have long characterized our community.

14. DOT Airport Ditch Cleaning Comments. In accordance with public requests and the council's support at the April work session I filed a request to DOT&PF to extend the comment period on the DOT-proposed cleaning project for Airport ditches until more environmental sampling could better characterize PFAS contamination in ditch sediments and the public could review and understand the results of the sampling effort.

15. City Administrator search committee and position description revision. I am pleased to have the assistance of a selection committee for the City Administrator Position, with Tom Williams planning to leave in a few weeks. Joining me are Council member Tania Lewis, past Treasurer Phoebe Vanselow, contractor Justin Marchbanks, and present City Administrator Tom Williams. We have reviewed and updated the position description for Council approval at the April General meeting and I expect to post it widely in the days immediately following council approval.

16. Beach Park CRMA. I have been pleased to see many public comments coming in regarding the proposed Amendment #1 and attached development plan for the Beach Park. We have scheduled for the April 11 General Meeting a public hearing on the resolution approving the amendment and development plan with a recommendation to DNR that they also approve and sign the document. I have invited Ben Stevens from the Southeast Alaska Regional DNR office to join us but received word

Wednesday 4/6 that he must be in Juneau for Jury service that day. His assistant, Megan Hightower, who has also supported us on this project is also away. They will tune in to the meeting by Zoom, however.

17. Welcome to Gustavus Kiosk relocation by GVA. Leah Okin has proposed sprucing up the Welcome to Gustavus Kiosk near the dock and relocating it across the road at the asphalt pull out opposite the Bulk Fuel Facility. That would provide a more-photographic background of the Fairweather Range (in good weather at least!) for visitors wishing to record their arrival by ferry to our fine town. I support her idea and will work with her to achieve her vision. The site is in the Beach Park Tract A, but we expect to locate it just out of the DOT right-of-way.

18. Bulk Fuel Facility. Gustavus Dray submitted their annual operating report, as required by the terms of their lease of the facility from the City of Gustavus. The accounts appear in order. Toshua Parker reported annual throughput 530,503 gallons of fuel for his fiscal year. Per the lease terms, the Gustavus Dray deposited \$26, 525 (at \$.05/gal) in the operations and maintenance account and charged \$13, 208 in maintenance costs. The ending balance in that O&M account was \$36,208. They deposited \$15,905 in the Replacement account bringing the total there to \$99,282.

I emailed Toshua my thank-you for the report and asked that he schedule pressure washing of the exteriors of the tanks as they have accumulated some coating of algae and dust since they were last washed in 2015. Such washing is chargeable to the maintenance account. Keeping the tanks in good order and appearance reflects best on the Dray's operation and on our community as they are among the first sights for a ferry-arriving visitor setting foot in Gustavus. Toshua emailed me in reply that he too noticed the need to clean up the tanks and will schedule it for this spring. My thanks to him for the cooperative effort!