

Mayor's Monthly Report

March 2026

Winter is still very much a reality! As the snow and cold weather continues, we are again stretching our resources, both human and financial, to the limit. Additionally, flight and ferry cancellations are challenges that affect freight and transportation needs. City road crews and private plows are doing a fantastic job of keeping access open and I've seen lots of people out still enjoying the recreational opportunities that snow provides. It's beautiful out there, so try to enjoy the snow as best you can, help your neighbors, celebrate the increasing daylight, and spring will be here before you know it!

Xunaa Borough: On Friday, February 27th Hoonah and the LBC filed responses to the appellate brief submitted by our attorney in December. Because two separate briefs were filed, we were given an extra ten days to file our response, now due March 30, 2026. After that, the Court will hear oral arguments and then has up to six months to make a decision.

In the meantime, the city council has approved hiring a consultant to work with me and the mayors of Pelican and Elfin Cove to perform a study to determine the feasibility of forming a borough with our three communities. This study will assess the ability to meet the LBC standards for incorporation, i.e. Relationship of Interest, Resources, Population, Boundaries and Best Interests of the State. The study may also look at the different classifications of boroughs, the extent of local support, impacts on the communities, ability to provide essential services, tax revenue and other considerations as deemed appropriate

The study will determine feasibility only; it is not a statement of support for an eventual borough. It should answer the questions that many of us have asked over the years about what a borough would mean to our community. It would also serve as an important asset for future discussions as to whether to consider borough formation.

It's possible that a study will prove that it is *not* feasible, which is also very valuable information.

The Court case will proceed as the study is underway. If the LBC decision to approve stands, the Xunaa Borough residents will vote on the proposal, which will determine the final outcome. If we prevail in court, then the study will provide us with a head start on looking towards the future. Either way, working collaboratively with our close neighbors will be of benefit in many ways. I have met twice with Pelican Mayor, Barry Bryant and Elfin Cove Chair, Zack Miller and consultant Kathie Wasserman. We plan to have another meeting with Kathie soon to formally begin by sending a letter of intent to the Local Boundary Commission.

Staff Meeting: The February staff meeting was sparsely attended, but we reviewed the draft travel Policy & Procedure. There was a lot of good input and discussion. Vice Mayor Beck and I worked on incorporating the input and sent out an updated draft to the staff, as well as a draft Travel

Authorization Form that Liesl created. We will review these documents at the March meeting and hope to have a final draft for the April General Meeting.

Training: The Alaska Conference of Mayors (ACoM) has initiated a monthly training available to elected officials and support staff. I have attended two of them recently, along with Liesl: Hard Meetings Clinic (or what to do when meeting fundamentals are being stress tested), and Title 29 and Municipal Powers. These are short, concise refresher presentations that I have found very worthwhile.

Saturday Market: Liesl and I are tentatively planning another appearance at the Second Saturday Market, April 11. We would like it to coincide with the new website launch so that we can demo and share that with the public at the same time. Stay tuned.

Other

I spent time this past month on:

- Mugs & Matters at the Fireweed, Fridays at 11 (average 3 visitors/month)
- Worked on amendments to the Endowment Fund Policy & Procedure
- Worked on updating the draft Policy & Procedure for city travel
- Worked on updating the Long-Term Storage Use Agreement
- Met with Liesl, Morgan and Kathy to review the status of the new website
- Attended the Snow Debrief meeting on 2/27
- Attended the Gateway Communities meeting with NPS on 2/27
- Attended one day of the AML Legislative Conference while I was in Juneau for dental work
- Wrote a letter in support of HB25, a bill banning the use of polystyrene containers
- Communications with members of the public

As always, community members, council members and city staff are encouraged to contact me if you have concerns or want to share thoughts or ideas.

Or join me at the Fireweed, Fridays at 11!

Sally McLaughlin, Mayor