

**Mayor's Report for November 12, 2022, General Meeting**  
**Drafted for deadline Wednesday Nov 9, 2022**

**Routine operations were the focus this month more than construction projects. Some highlights are:**

**1. SEARHC Gustavus Medical Clinic Memorandum of Understanding.** On October 14, I met with Noble Johnston of SEARHC and Dr. Rod Vaught to discuss the relationship between the City and the SEARHC Clinic. Dr. Vaught is the GVFD medical director and serves also as the liaison between the SEARHC Clinic and the Gustavus community. We outlined terms for a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Clinic and the City. Following the meeting I drafted an MOU identifying how the City and Clinic will partner to support public health promotion and emergency medical response for Gustavus. Dr. Vaught, City Administrator Kathy Leary, and Fire Chief Sol Martinez reviewed and contributed to the draft before Dr. Vaught forwarded it to Noble Johnston for consideration and any edits from their side. We await a response from SEARHC and hope to finalize the MOU before the end of this year.

**2. Septage Service.** City Administrator Kathy Leary has taken the lead in planning and enabling septic pumping service for Gustavus from Juneau Septic. We have assigned John Barry, PE, to manage the project. John has inspected the two used 10,000-gal, double-walled, fiberglass tanks available for sale in Juneau and found them satisfactory but needing a few minor fiberglass repairs to the outer of the double walls. On October 10, John and I met with Paul Berry at the DRC to identify locations for possible installation of septage storage tanks on DRC property. John checked water depths in the DRC monitoring wells and has identified locations where the tanks could be safely buried. Even in the best locations, though, the tanks will need a gravel mound over them and an adjacent gravel pad from which a pump truck can discharge into the tanks or pump out of them. In addition, we will need to anchor the tanks securely to be sure they can't float out of the ground in high groundwater conditions. This anchor may require more construction expense than originally anticipated in the scoping document.

On October 15, I emailed City of Hoonah via their website to ask if they would be interested in offering septic pumping service here in Gustavus as a possible alternative or supplementary disposal channel. Hoonah has a new wastewater plant and I sought to give them a chance to offer service here as well. When I had no response, I followed up with a phone call on Oct 24. The administrative person I talked to said she had forwarded my email to the City Administrator and would remind him to reply. As of Nov 8, I have not heard back, so I gather they aren't interested in doing business.

While Kathy develops the agreement with Juneau Septic Pumping Service, John Barry is preparing plans and the RFQ for the tank installation. He will also file the DEC permit application for the septage storage facility. If we conclude the deal to purchase the tanks, we will pay for the minor fiberglass repairs in Juneau before shipping them to Gustavus.

If all goes well, we may be able to install the tanks by early spring and begin service soon thereafter.

Per the suggestion of the Council at the work session Nov 8 Kathy and I prepared a news release for the public regarding these developments.

**3. Tong Road Drainage Improvement Project.** Early in November Glacier Bay Construction completed the last of the FEMA-funded flood recovery projects. They replaced the culvert at the west end of Tong Road at the entrance to the Glacier Bay Country Inn driveway. The culvert had been filled with sediment during the December 2, 2020, flood so backed up water flowing westward in the ditch along Tong Road.

The culvert and cleaned ditch will be much more effective in capturing and diverting heavy-rain runoff from the adjacent agricultural unit and should prevent flooding into the subdivision along the west side of Toad Road as occurred in December 2020. Glacier Bay Construction has billed the project per their project RFQ quote and Kathy is preparing to submit the invoice for FEMA reimbursement. Thanks Justin and Ponch Marchbanks for getting this vital project done on schedule.

**4. Road Maintenance.** Glacier Bay Construction has also worked effectively to keep roads as drivable as possible despite heavy rains during October and early November. They managed to get most of the heavily traveled roads smooth before they froze this week. We hope they will stay mostly frozen and smooth awhile. They also have completed a substantial amount of brushing along city roads, especially in the Dolly Varden area, which will make plowing more effective this winter.

This year snowplowing was included in the annual maintenance contract, so we have not had to issue a special RFQ for plowing. Glacier Bay Construction will be plowing city roads as needed.

A big thank you is due to Janusz Kunat and his ByteNet crew for completing the relocation of junction posts along our new Wilson Road ditch at Jensen and Hemlock intersections. Relocation of the posts completed the work of the Wilson Road Drainage Improvement project ditch extension and will help safeguard those internet infrastructure components during snow plowing and other future maintenance work. The ByteNet crew is also securing and burying fiber cables at junction posts throughout the community. Their work will help assure system reliability throughout the system buildout. Thanks, Janusz!

**5. Old Post Office Building.** Thanks are due to the AP&T's Don Duke and Marty Rogers for installing power to the old post office building, which the City is renovating for lease as a bike shop. John Nixon will be installing the meter and checking internal circuits to make sure the power is in safe condition for Kenn Magowan to move in early this winter season to begin his renovations. We look forward to seeing the building cleaned up, repaired and into new productive use in time for the summer season.

**6. Salmon River Park Playground Equipment.** I was pleased on October 24 to have a visit at City Hall from Ms. Karen McSpadden's Gustavus School students and to hear their ideas for upgrading the playground equipment in the Salmon River Park. The students came to propose installation of equipment suitable for older and bigger children than the existing equipment accommodates. A wider range of equipment would be suitable for family and other groups with children of all ages and sizes. I was impressed and pleased that they advocated for the needs also of adults who bring the children to the park. They suggested handicapped access to the play area and benches for parents to sit on while children play. It was a joy to hear their suggestions. I will continue working with them over this winter to identify suitable equipment and develop a project to construct play-area improvements.

**7. School District Planning Meetings.** As Mayor of Gustavus I was invited to participate along with fellow Gustavus representatives Cam Cacioppo, Karen McSpadden, Jessie Soder, Jen Todd, and student representative Marina Todd, in a two-day Chatham School District planning meeting in Juneau, October 6-7. Superintendent Ralph Watkins and two facilitators from the Association of Alaska School Boards led 30-some participants from Chatham SD communities through development of a strategic plan draft for the District. It was a wonderfully productive session and I appreciated meeting and hearing from both the Gustavus representatives and those from the other towns. The facilitators commented that our school district is the most diverse of all those they work with in Alaska. Yet, across the district we share

common challenges, such as retaining students at our small community schools, upgrading, and maintaining facilities, strengthening community participation, and the sharing the skills and knowledge of community members.

The group reviewed compiled results of the District-wide survey completed in all the communities just before the meetings and discussed the challenges we saw for our local schools. The meeting participants developed a new vision and mission statements, identified shared values and beliefs, and laid out goals and objectives. The District staff is now developing a new written five-year strategic plan informed by the Juneau meeting. The Chatham School Board approved the new Vision and Mission statements at its October meeting.

I am impressed with the leadership of Superintendent Ralph Watkins. I followed up after the meeting with a letter to him offering the City's partnership toward strengthening the Gustavus School. While the School is independent of the City, the City-owned and -operated Gustavus Public Library serves also as the School Library. I bet it's the best in the District! Our two fine librarians have long teaching experience and dedication to young people's learning. Our Library connection offers an unusual opportunity to develop complementary learning programs for Gustavus students, which will expand beyond what the District can offer itself. Reading and study programs at the library, the Story Trail, and the Alaska S.L.E.D program outlined for us by our librarians at the November 6 work session are a few examples. I'm proud of our Librarians Jessie Soder and LeAnn Weikle for their enthusiasm for cooperating with the Gustavus School and helping Gustavus students excel.

**8. Treasurer Position.** Since the Council's approval at the special meeting October 26, Ben Sadler has jumped into the Treasurer position with enthusiasm. He is rapidly mastering the accounts and accounting systems, collecting revenue, and paying the bills on time. He has coordinated with City Administrator Kathy Leary to file for the remaining FEMA reimbursements for flood damage and mitigation work and with US Fish and Wildlife Service for our recently completed bridge project. FWS reimbursed the City for the bridge expense within a few days of Ben's application. Ben does this all while still covering fall tasks of his old job as Marine Facilities Coordinator. Working with former Council-member Joe Vanderzanden he managed the movement of the city wooden floats to their winter storage at the boat harbor and has arranged for vessel support to move the steel float to a new, protected winter anchorage in the Salmon River. Thanks, Joe Vanderzanden for pitching in on the float moves. Welcome aboard and thank you Treasurer Ben Sadler!

**9. Another Successful Election Season.** Thanks to City Clerk Karen Platt, Bre Ohlson, and their enthusiastic and dedicated team of election workers who made possible a flawless November election season in Gustavus. And thanks to all the Gustavus voters who voted early at City Hall, or by mail, or at the Community Center polling place. Elections here are a model for our entire Nation. Let us rejoice in our hometown democracy!

Mike Taylor  
Mayor