

Mayor's Report
For General Meeting June 19, 2023
Mike Taylor, Mayor

May and the first half of June have seen several key projects completed and others underway:

Septage storage tanks. Glacier Bay Construction completed the installation of the two 10,000-gallon septage storage tanks behind the DRC including an access road and truck platform for pumping into and out of the tanks. The City's part of the project is now done. Juneau Septage still needs to install their fabricated tank lids and will then be able to pump septic tanks in Gustavus and store material in the new facility until it can be transferred to the Juneau wastewater plant. City Administrator Kathy Leary is working with Juneau Septic to expedite the service many Gustavus residents have requested. Thanks to both Glacier Bay Construction and project manager John Barry for getting this project done.

Beach Park hardened trail, campfire, and parking areas. Glacier Bay Construction, also with oversight by project manager John Barry, completed the new Beach Park hardened trail and campfire site improvements. The new compacted gravel trail is very firm and will allow much easier access for wheelchairs or walkers to reach the old viewing bench and the campfire area. The campfire area also has a compacted gravel pad to support wheelchairs. We thank Shane Patrick for donating a large diameter culvert coupling for the fire surround. I've been pleased that the new fire pit has been used several times already. The City provides a wheelbarrow to carry firewood and other items out to the campfire site.

As finishing touches, Glacier Bay Construction also graded the east side parking area and installed additional logs to outline the pull-out parking area opposite the Bulk Fuel Facility. Marine Facilities Coordinator Larry Platt has installed new signs reminding park users that the Beach Park areas off the road and beyond the logs that outline parking areas are closed to motor vehicles to enable revegetation of the previously worn-out areas and to maintain an attractive natural environment. Bikes, e-bikes, and motorized wheelchairs are OK, however. We hope Gustavus residents will respect those vehicle limitations and enjoy getting away from the road and out into our beautiful community park.

We will soon be posting an area on the east side, not far from the restroom, in front of the trees in the direction of the volleyball net, as the designated walk-in camping area. We expect very light camping use and don't intend to make improvements or to regulate it unless significant impacts or conflicts arise.

Further improvements at the Beach. The Council this week also will consider approval of a scoping document for a fat-tired, beach-ready, wheelchair, walker, and jogger-stroller for use at the Beach Park. These three equipment items will be stored, ready for public use, in a small shed on the Bulk Fuel Facility convenient to the Park and adjoining meadow trails. Council member Janene Driscoll is championing this project in memory of her late Aunt Isabel who was wheelchair bound but enjoyed the outdoors.

The Gustavus Visitor Association plans to contract with Gustavus Construction Company to relocate the Beach/Dock Road visitor welcome kiosk to the asphalt pull out area on the west side of Dock Road across from the Bulk Fuel Facility. This location has the advantage of a more-photographic background, especially when the Fairweathers are in view. The installation will be improved with a concrete pad for a cleaner and more attractive appearance. The GVA plans visitor information content upgrades, with materials from local artists. This month we have added to the Council agenda the introduction of a non-

code ordinance increasing the GVA FY24 funding by \$5400 to cover the kiosk relocation. The source of funding is bed tax receipts.

Library Bike Shelter. We look forward to construction of the Library Bike Shelter by Matt Davis of Terra Construction Co. Glacier Bay Construction Co completed the extension of the existing parking pad to the shelter site readying it for Terra to begin.

City Hall Heat Pump. Thanks to John Nixon of Salmon River Electric Co for wiring the power to our new City Hall heat pump system. Thanks to Dean Weikle for helping me get the unit installed. We now have the oil heater off and we are heating City Hall with clean hydro power. We very much appreciate the donation of this system by the manufacturer MRCOOL. We found the do-it-yourself installation relatively uncomplicated and are pleased with the result and performance of the system. We encourage any interested residents or businesses to stop by City Hall and check out the installed system. We will be planning projects soon to install more heat pumps for other City facilities.

Playground equipment for Salmon River Park. As reported last month, with help from the Karen McSpadden's classes at the Gustavus School, we selected equipment from the manufacturer Exerplay to expand playground equipment at the Salmon River Park. Approval of the NCO to fund the purchase is on the agenda this month. On approval, we will order the equipment and will put out an RFQ by month's end for installation.

GVFD radio tower. Fire Chief Sol Martinez and project manager John Barry are preparing the GVFD tower equipment for installation by Glacier Bay Construction this summer. Because the tower set was originally bought for installation at the Falls Creek overlook area in 2011, it has been stored for over a decade. John and Sol are assuring that all the parts and hardware were still present. We hope to see it erected this summer and equipped with the new radio antenna to serve responses more effectively across Gustavus.

Road cul-de-sac turnarounds. Glacier Bay Construction has the go-ahead to begin work on the cul-de-sac turnarounds for Porcupine St, Extratuff Rd, Mary's Rd, and Meadow Ln, plus an improvement of Glen's Ditch Rd from Same Old Road intersection to the Nagoonberry Trail parking area.

City flowers. Thanks to Jen Landry of Steller Botanicals for growing flowers and preparing hanging baskets to brighten City facilities this summer. Thanks to Meadow Brook and Ann Wildman for planting the flowerbed boxes at the Salmon River Park and for hanging baskets at City Hall, the Park shelter, the Library kiosk, the Beach kiosk, and the Airport welcome sign. Fire Chief Sol Martinez hung baskets at the Fire Hall. Jen also grew the plants that Librarians Leann Weikle and Jessie Soder will plant in the Library flower beds with the reading kids. Hooray for a more beautiful Gustavus this summer!

FEMA Reimbursements for Dec 2020 flood repairs. Another big hooray: City Administrator Kathy Leary's work with the Alaska Department of Homeland Security's Jenny Ballenger paid off big this month when we received a bank transfer of \$164201.94 as a second partial reimbursement for road repairs and drainage improvements, the City made following the December 2020 flood. Kathy and Jenny have agreed on the documentation for a final payment of something over \$72,000 for other aspects of the work. *Thanks so much Kathy for securing in this much needed cash.* We will recycle it over time in more capital improvement drainage and flood control improvements. This effort will likely continue for several years as the City builds resilience for heavier storms driven by our changing climate.

Water sampling results for City facilities. In May, Shannon & Wilson technicians completed sampling for PFAS contamination of City raw well water and treated tap water at City Hall, the Fire Hall, the Library and at the Community Garden. In June, we received the analytical report for the samples showing PFAS concentrations were undetectable at the Community Garden and at the Library. For City Hall and the Fire Hall, sample results were barely detectable, and far below both the current and the more-stringent *proposed* EPA standards, for drinking water. We plan follow-up sampling in July and October to capture expected seasonal variation in ground water for better assurance that our city water taps provide safe drinking water.

Engine 27 sale. The City has sold its surplus Fire Engine 27 to Glacier Bay Construction Company for \$8,199. We are glad to have the old apparatus out of the Fire Hall back yard and on to a more productive future with a local contractor.

Hydro Road Access. The City has received complaints from recreational users of the Hydro Road about an adjacent property owner attempting to restrict public access along the road. The road is the route to the State of Alaska land on which the Falls Creek Hydro project was developed. The easements purchased from adjacent property owners by Gustavus Electric Company (whose successor is now AP&T) for the project were to the power company and the State of Alaska and to their grantees and assigns. The project license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) requires the power company to assure (i.e., grant) public recreational access to the project lands. That access is assured to the public in the FERC-approved AP&T Falls Creek Recreational Plan and Road Management Plan. I have reached out to AP&T and the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) Division of Mining, Land, and Water to clarify and assert the public right to unhindered recreational access to the project area using their easements along the Hydro Road. I encourage all Gustavus residents and visitors to enjoy the healthy recreational benefits of the Falls Creek Hydro Road, but to do so respectfully, remaining on the gravel road up to the facility entry gate and absolutely avoiding any impact to neighboring properties along the road.

Best wishes for a sunny Gustavus summer!

Mike Taylor
Mayor, City of Gustavus