

Mayor's Report—January 17, 2022

We have kept busy through December and early January with road-related projects, including snow plowing, flood recovery and mitigation efforts and with pandemic protective measures.

1. Roads. Snowplowing has dominated our road work this last month. We judge when best to plow by watching weather forecasts and gauging how much snow has accumulated. Glacier Bay Construction has provided excellent service and our roads have largely been passable. The berms have seriously reduced road width. Melting and settling back now during warmer weather will help but if we get more heavy snow periods, we may need to use loaders to move out berms. The experience this winter suggests we need to cut more brush and remove trees along many roads to provide more room for snow berms in the future. We should assume that with continuing climate change, heavier precipitation in winter can be either rain or snow and we need to improve both drainage and snow handling space.

2. Flood Recovery. Tom and I continue to work with FEMA on meeting their requirements for us to receive reimbursement for the flood recovery work. We seem to be getting closer to getting our first check. Our application under the recovery program covers only repairs but we have used those opportunities to improve road quality and drainage as we do the repairs.

3. FEMA Mitigation Grant application—Hydrology study. There is a separate FEMA funding program for mitigation that goes significantly beyond restoring roads to their preflood quality. We plan to use that funding program to dig new or improve existing drainage ditches and install culverts along roads where they didn't exist or weren't damaged in the Dec 2020 flood. The first step in the process is to complete a hydrology survey to inform and justify the improvements. This is a FEMA requirement but there is funding for the survey, and we are applying for that as the first step before seeking funding for construction. The survey will also inform future subdivision design and drainage plans.

4. Grandpas Farm Bridge. Last summer we filed a grant application with the USFS Lynn Canal/Icy Strait Regional Advisory Committee to fund replacement of the Harry Hall Creek culvert under Grandpas Farm Road. I checked in with the committee this week and found that they haven't acted on the grant applications due to internal committee organizational issues. However, the contact gave me suggestions for strengthening our application regarding the benefits to national forest resources and I will update it accordingly. We hope the committee will take acts on the applications in 2022.

5. Good River Bridge. PND engineers is on hold for snow melt before proceeding with inspection work and recommendations for repairs to the bridge and the west end embankment issues.

6. Pandemic Measures. I met with City Staff to discuss protective measures, particularly mask-wearing requirements for people in our facilities. The staff expressed frustration and stress from dealing with argumentative challengers to the mask requirements. Challengers have sought to persuade department heads in some cases to change their policies for their facilities. Some very uncomfortable situations have developed that interfered with staffs work to provide the services for which they are responsible. All staff members supported a mask-wearing requirement indoors in City facilities as necessary to protect staff, volunteers, and users of the facilities. They said that members of the public using the facilities mostly approved of and appreciated the requirement to wear masks indoors at City locations.

As a result, I issued an order as Mayor to be posted on entries to City Hall, the Firehall, the Library and the Community Chest requiring masks to be worn until further notice. This sets the responsibility for the

requirement on me as Mayor rather than on staff. Given the political nature of the issue, it seems best to have that decision be made by an elected official. We are assuring alternative channels for service delivery that don't require entry to our facilities.

I also drafted the Resolution on the agenda tonight to confirm and flesh out the policy clearly as a council policy. I will report monthly on my pandemic risk assessment and indicate any policy modifications that appear justified and possible.

A covid infection surge, driven by the Omicron variant, is occurring nationwide and in Alaska. Hospitals are experiencing worse overloading than has occurred at any time during the pandemic. Cases among children requiring hospitalization have risen markedly. This week the Statewide Covid Alert level is High. It is High for our census district as well. Hospital capacity is limited statewide. The DHSS continues to recommend that all Alaskans get vaccinated and wear protective masks in public locations. The DHSS recommends universal mask wearing in schools. I support continuing the protective measures City facilities as set forth in the new resolution but will reassess next month.

7. Beach CRMA. The updated Beach CRMA remains in DNR's offices for their final approval. The Southeast office has recommended that the update we negotiated be put out for public comment, but the Anchorage director's office has not finished their review. I hope to have it on the February agenda for posting for public input and action then in March.

8. Marine Facilities Use Agreement. Thanks to Tom Williams and Jim Mackovjak for help developing the use agreement form on the agenda for approval this month. We look forward to implementing it and having a smoother visitor season at our marine facilities this year.

9. Trails Project promotion. We submitted descriptions for three possible Gustavus trail projects for including in the State Comprehensive Recreation Plan (SCORP). Those projects include a bike trail from the Airport to the Park boundary with an extension down Dock Rd to the dock, a network of trails in and around the Beach Park, and an ATV trail or track. We hope that by including them in the SCORP we may help position Gustavus for funding for such projects. Thanks to Ponch Marchbanks for keeping track of the SCORP opportunities and for encouraging new trails for use by residents and visitors.

10. Infrastructure grants. Tom and I are monitoring opportunities for positioning Gustavus for infrastructure grant funding. We are including Gustavus CIP projects on lists through Alaska Municipal League and the Southeast Conference. We are promoting a wave energy barrier project for the dock to reduce storm and wave impact on the city floats. Tom and I have been participating in the zoom conference calls for the "Seabelt" organization within AML, which works to promote project funding for Alaska coastal communities. Docks and harbors are a top priority.

11. City Budget. We have a work session scheduled for Monday January 24 to start the council's budget preparation work for FY 23. I have asked Kyle Bishop and Bella Furr to help me with a review of staff salaries and hours in preparation for the budget work. We will report to the council with any recommendations that may inform the budget provisions.

12. Gravel pit model redesign. We are behind my intended schedule for firming up a new operating model for the city gravel pits. Normally we issue new contractor agreements in February for the coming construction year. We hope this year to move to a single operator model for excavation and stockpiling of gravel for both city use and sale to contractors for private projects.