



City of Homer

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Memorandum

TO: Mayor Castner and Homer City Council
FROM: Katie Koester, City Manager
DATE: February 24, 2020
SUBJECT: City Manager Report

Facility Tour Reminder

As a reminder, departments continue to be offering tours of City facilities. While open to the public, these are designed for Councilmembers to become familiar with the complex organization you are in charge of and the hardworking employees who provide City services. The next tour is this Friday from 12:15-1:15pm at the Sewer Treatment Plant and promises to be fascinating. Anyone can sign up online through the City's website.

Online map updates

Several web maps displaying public works and parks information are now accessible via an ArcGIS Online web link embedded in the City of Homer website. The Interactive maps display basic information regarding the city's water, sewer and road systems, the location and layout of city maintained campgrounds, and a detailed map of the Hickerson Cemetery. Unlike the previous PDF maps, the web maps provide an interactive, searchable platform that enhances spatial orientation and allows for easy information gathering through popups and search queries. ESRI's aerial imagery is used as the base-map (which is fairly up to date for Alaska standards) and is navigable to any extent, further enhancing user orientation and location finding. These features will be particularly useful in assisting with common inquiries fielded by public works staff. For example, with detailed parcel information and water and sewer main locations, PW maps can easily help prospective homebuyers evaluate vacant lots for water and sewer service; visitors to the cemetery can directly search out and navigate to the location of an interred person using web app tools, and campers can find which campsite may best suit their needs by interactively exploring the campground and greater vicinity.

Alaska Municipal League Trip Report

I traveled with Councilmembers Smith, Lord and Port and Harbor Director to Juneau the week of February 17th to participate in the Alaska Municipal League (AML) Legislative Fly-in and meet with state and federal officials. As usual, it was a fast paced whirl wind of a trip.

After a welcome address from Juneau Mayor Beth Weldon, AML spent the morning briefing members on bills in play that may be of interest to municipalities. Governor Dunleavy's proposal to place a spending limit on appropriations, and how certain details of that play out, will be an interesting issue to follow. Changes to Title IV, laws that govern alcohol sales, continues to be controversial after 7 years of Senator

Micchice working on rewrites. Many municipalities see it as a local control issue and are advocating a greater say in how many package store and liquor license a community can have. This is especially important for hub communities. Legislation that raises small amounts of revenue, notably gambling and increases to the Motor Fuel Tax, were really the only revenue generating measures currently before the Legislature, and it did not appear that given an election year that would change anytime soon. Homer will be following Rep. Stutes legislation, HB 246 that establishes the Alaska Marine Highway Corporation, similar to the Railroad. This is a long bill that probably won't see final passage this year but is a great discussion point as the Legislature struggles with how to bring stability to the Marine Highway System.

Over lunch Senators Micchice, Coghill and von Imhof addressed the group emphasizing the need for solutions and coming together – a refrain we have heard for some time. Senator von Imhof, Co-Chair of Senate Finance spoke of a 'four-point plan' for the budget, including how to use the Permanent Fund, details of which are laid out in SB 104 and SB 103. The Governor's relatively new Office of Management and Budget Director, Neil Steininger gave an informative and soft spoken overview of the Governor's budget and successfully avoided questions on policy.

Unfortunately we had to cancel our appointment with friend of the Peninsula Representative Chuck Kopp to hear Senator Murkowski speak to AML after addressing a Joint Session on the hill. Born in Ketchikan, Alaska, she empathized with how reductions to the Alaska Marine Highways System (AMHS) have crippled communities and reminded the group that solutions need to maintain eligibility for federal highway dollars, which constitute approximately 25% of AMHS operating dollars. I was able to follow up informally with Representative Kopp at the Legislative Reception held later that evening.

Councilmembers Lord, Smith and I met with Representative Stutes' staff and expressed Homer's solidarity with Kodiak regarding AMHS. It was great to be able to provide her a copy of Resolution 19-079 "Considering Unacceptable the Reduction to Funding for the Alaska Marine Highway System in FY20..." After meetings on the hill, Port and Harbor Director Hawkins joined us at the Federal Building for a visit with Rear Admiral Bell. We were able to give him an update on the significant progress the Large Vessel Harbor has made and ask for Coast Guard support and participation as we entered into the feasibility, preliminary design and environmental phase. Admiral Bell agreed to send us a letter documenting Coast Guard's need for safe moorage in Homer, and we will be following up with him. He also talked about replacing the Naushon with a Small Boat Safety Detachment when she was decommissioned, a service that is greatly needed in Kachemak Bay and beyond.

The busy Tuesday ended with a Legislative reception where we were able to connect informally with many of the Legislators and their staff. When I worked in the capital building, I always recall the AML reception as a must go and attendance certainly reflected that sentiments have not changed in that regard.

Wednesday morning started off with a lineup of commissioners and deputy commissioners updating the group on everything from REAL ID implementation to the effect of cuts in ADOT maintenance budgets. Pat Pitney, the Legislative Director of Finance who replaced long serving David Teal when he retired and worked as Governor Walker's OMB Director, gave the Legislatures impression on the Governor's proposed budget and answered questions on the proposed solutions (or partial solutions, as seemed to be the consensus given it is an election year). After a lunch panel made up of leadership from the House, including Speaker Edgemon, we had our most important meeting of the trip with DOT Commissioner MacKinnon (ADOT) and Governor Dunleavy's staff, Ben Stevens regarding the Large Vessel Harbor and our ask for them to continue to be a partner with us by committing \$750,000 over three years to the General Investigation Study. Central Region DOT has suggested these funds come from Cruise Ship Passenger Vessel funds – which would require an appropriation by the Legislature. We were able to share the good news that progress has been

made on erosion on the Homer Spit as the Army Corps of Engineers is working on securing full federal funding for a General Investigation Study. We were able to secure a commitment for a letter of support for that project. Our afternoon rounded out with meetings with our local delegation (Rep. Vance and Sen. Stevens) where we shared with them the updates on the Large Vessel Harbor and the Homer City Council's response to Governor Dunvelay's solicitation for 'the Alaska we want.'

Thursday morning Alaska Municipal League was pleased by an appearance from Governor Dunleavy, the first time he has addressed the group after many invites. His presentation was light on details, but he was well spoken and used many illustrative metaphors, including asking if we wanted to look like Iceland or Venezuela in the future. He emphasized the importance of the Permanent Fund Dividend on Alaska's economy in the form of increased spending and how that positively effects government. After a 'deep dive' into economic development issues, AML wrapped up. Thursday afternoon I facilitated a strategic planning session for Alaska Municipal Manager's Association, Councilmembers Lord and Smith met with Senator Micchice on the Large Vessel Harbor and then began the struggle to get home given the massive storms covering all of Alaska last week. Some ended up in Seattle, others were stranded in Anchorage for days – needless to say it was a long journey for all and I am sure we are glad to be home.

