



City of Homer

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Memorandum

TO: Mayor Castner and Homer City Council
FROM: Katie Koester, City Manager
DATE: October 22, 2019
SUBJECT: City Manager's Report

Travel Report: International City Manager Association Conference

I am writing this report in Nashville at the tail end of an engaging, whirlwind International City Manager Association conference. It has been an exhausting but satisfying week of networking, learning, and reflecting and I am excited to head back and implement everything I am learning. I would like to take the opportunity to share a few highlights with you so you understand the value of sending me to these professional development opportunities.

A theme of the conference was how to be your best self professionally, whether that means self-care, finding your purpose, or cultivating your passion. One speaker discussed micro-resilience strategies (small seconds, long breaks) to refocus your attention; for example, focusing on your pinky toe to bring you back to the present moment. During a breakout session with Keynote speaker Bonnie Saint John, we worked on how to hone in our sense of purpose to bring vision and energy into the work day. I have included her inspirational worksession exercise as I feel many of you will find interest in this material. It is my goal to incorporate a couple of these types of exercises with my leadership team as a way to go beyond the to-do lists and remember why we serve this great community. A keynote speaker from the tech industry spoke on how important it is to fail and learn from your failures – a concept that is hard for risk-adverse city managers to come to terms with.

I sought out opportunities to learn about improving communication with Council, which is a cornerstone of good government. I got great insight on strategic planning and visioning with Council and templates on onboarding new Councilmembers, and how to facilitate Council communication with departments. One theme that came up repeatedly was the importance of all Councilmembers having the same set of information. If one member asks a question, it is likely other members have the same curiosity so it is important to share the answers with everyone so all decision makers get the information they need to make good decisions. I will be working on incorporating these strategies and am excited about the timing with the upcoming Council retreat in January.

Equity and inclusion have been themes of ICMA conferences for some time and breakout sessions worked on ways to not only invite new voices to the table but make sure their voices are heard. Various speakers talked about how all of us possess diversity in multiple ways and how to cultivate diverse perspectives from the team you work with (City Council or staff) to be more effective.

Specific worksession topics I attended included managing chaos; how we are living in an era where technological advancement will change society to the scale of the industrial revolution and how that shapes the perspective of our constituents and the future of our communities; unlocking blockchain; helping your board get

off to a good start; avoiding career killers; how to be family friendly in the workplace; cultivating your purpose; creating value in government budgets by deeply analyzing operations and the front line; bringing the heart and mind together in your work; and non-cash employee benefits. Whew! If Councilmembers have questions on any of these topics, I welcome the opportunity to share and reflect on what I have learned.

Thank you again for this amazing opportunity be inspired and motivated.

Visit with Governor Dunleavy

Mayor Castner, Port and Harbor Advisory Commission Chair Zimmerman, and I met with Governor Dunleavy on Thursday, October 17 when he was visiting Homer. We took our 15 minutes to update the Governor on the Large Vessel Harbor Expansion project and asked him to support the Department of Transportation partnering with the City as a non-federal sponsor in the General Investigation Study with the Army Corps-- a \$250,000 per year, 3 year commitment. The Corps has put a request to fund their share of the General Investigation study in their 2020 and 2021 work plan (which means we could get notice of funding as early as February 2020). The study requires a 50% nonfederal match (\$1.5m over 3 years). In the past, this project and associated costs have been shared by the state – a great and appropriate partner for a regional and statewide transportation project like the Large Vessel Harbor Expansion. The Governor was very receptive to the project and overall was engaged, inquiring about the City’s interest in public private partnerships. We responded that the City is open to partnerships and acknowledged their importance with a project of this scale, keeping in mind that the details matter.

Application to Amend Certificate of Public Convenience Regarding Swell LLC Submitted

The application to the RCA for amending the City’s certificate of public convenience to also service the Swell LLC property water has been submitted. The application is available online here under Docket U-19-092 (you can also use the tracking number TR1905587):

<http://rca.alaska.gov/RCAWeb/Filings/FilingDetails.aspx?id=53ddb93c-783d-41b5-bd67-d4ae811c83dd>

The RCA provided the following information in regards to the application’s timeline:

“Commission’s determination of completeness: 11/8/19

Public Comment period closed: 11/14/19

Notice of intent to compete for service area due: 11/23/19

Competing Applications (if applicable) due: 1/22/19

Please note that these dates have not been finalized and are subject to change based on the publication date of the notice. If the application is found to be complete by 11/8/19, the Commission will issue its decision on the matter no later than 180 days from the date the complete application was filed (see AS 42.05.175(a)(2)). All other timelines regarding Commission actions/decisions will be detailed in subsequent Commission Orders within the docket. Although this proceeding will not likely require the entire statutory timeline permitted, Staff cannot share such details with the applicant while the docket is under deliberation.”

Erosion Control on the Homer Spit – Next step with the Army Corps

The City of Homer has requested that the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), the Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT), and the City work in a cooperative effort to develop and implement a long term maintenance plan to mitigate and stabilize erosion conditions on the Homer Spit. In May of 2019, Homer City staff, the AK DOT’s Chief of Planning, the Soldotna M&O Superintendent, USACE Operations Branch Chief and staff from Civil Works, Environmental Resources, Hydraulics and Hydrology departments, and representatives

from Alaska Legislative offices all met for a joint worksession to discuss the recent and long term erosion on the Homer Spit. Past research work on Homer Spit erosion was reviewed, and short term items such as survey analysis, grain size analysis, and use of dredged materials were discussed. Long term options in the areas of protection and beach nourishment were also explored and each member of the group discussed their possible authorities and limitations within the scope of these ideas to develop a cohesive long term approach. During this discussion, the Army Corps of Engineers offered that a Sediment Management Plan for the Homer Spit could be prepared under the Planning Assistance to States Authority, which would allow them to cost share 50% of the study and plan's development. A completed comprehensive plan will not only assist with long term management of erosion on the Spit from a planning standpoint, but also provides supporting documentation to validate the need. The members present at the worksession felt this would assist them with acquisition of funds and materials for future maintenance efforts from their agencies.

Moratorium on Clearing in ROW

With the passage of Resolution 19-073(S) at the last Council meeting (placing a moratorium on right-of-way clearing and maintenance for City of Homer Public Works Department), I wanted to take the opportunity to clarify work the City will and will not be doing in case there are any complaints or confusion when members of the Council or public see Public Works equipment in the field. Public works will continue to complete ditch clearing where tree cutting is not required, issue permits to allow property owners/ contractors/ utilities to clear rights-of-way when necessary to complete their projects, perform locates for utilities doing work in the right of way (as required by state law), and clear trees in city parks consistent with the parks master plan and for safety. Public works will suspend tree cutting in any easement, alley or right of way. Any tree cutting during the moratorium period required to respond to public requests for safety reasons including sight distance, falling hazards, or access to fire hydrants will need to be approved on a case by case basis by City Council. In the meantime, staff is working with Mayor Castner to fulfill his request in the accompanying Memorandum to "obtain an opinion from the City Attorney regarding the prevailing Alaska law of the liability of municipal trespass and/or disregard of covenant protection."

HAWSP Review

The Finance Department has been in conversations with Altman & Rogers, the firm Council has hired to consult on the HAWSP fund and governmental accounting. The department will provide the firm with a basic overview of what we are specifically looking for and determining what documents the firm will need to accomplish the task. The next step is to figure out how to schedule one on one meetings with Council members. I think it would be best to schedule these meetings in person given the detailed and complicated subject matter (even though that means an extra trip to Homer, which is \$300 per trip in their proposal). The worksession is scheduled for November 25th, and Finance suggests holding individual meetings at least 2 weeks prior so the firm has time to respond to any specific questions that come up, which would be the week of November 11th. I will work with Council on a day that week that works for the majority of members. I would also like feedback on if the Mayor and Council would like to schedule an extended worksession on the 25th to go over the topic.

Update on Implementing the Bag Ban

Since reporting last month about our plans to reach out to Homer businesses and residents about the upcoming single use plastic bag ban, we have developed a direct mailing and a City website article with FAQs and downloadable informational outreach materials (a flyer, tent card and social media posts). I have attached the informational outreach materials to this report. Staff will also personally visit stores to inform them of the regulation change, offer outreach materials, and field questions/concerns. Working proactively with retailers will help make the transition smooth so that businesses and City shoppers aren't caught off guard about the new carryout bag regulations. As part of the effort to make implementation after January 1 smooth as well, I will be bringing you an ordinance next month clarifying details for implementation of the single use plastic bag ban.

Enc:

Exercise: Tap into the Power of Purpose by Bonnie St. John

Plastic bag graphic/ hand out to stores

Letter of Interest in Planning Assistance to States Grant to Army Corps

Cook Inlet RCAC report

Two Letters of Support for Kachemak Bay State Park Grants

Letter from Chief Kirko to Governor Dunleavy

State of Alaska Homer Commercial Passenger Vessel Tax Report: Information Request