

To: Whittier City Council
From: City Manager Jackie C. Wilde
Re: City Manager Report for May 2025 Council Meeting

The City of Whittier's May report captures significant progress and critical updates across multiple departments, showcasing the city's continued commitment to infrastructure development, financial accountability, and community engagement.

Representative Ky Holland has introduced House Bill 216, authorizing the Alaska Railroad Corporation to convey approximately 85 acres of land within Whittier city limits to the municipality at fair-market value. Senator Cathy Giessel has introduced the companion legislation, Senate Bill 191, which is now under active consideration with testimony underway. This coordinated legislative effort reflects the shared position of both the City and ARRC that fee-simple ownership—not leasehold—is necessary for responsible development Whittier.

During the week of May 13, I traveled to Washington, D.C. alongside Council Member Victor Shen and Assistant City Manager Adison Spafford to advance the City of Whittier's FY 2026 Community Project Funding and Congressionally Directed Spending priorities. Over the course of three days, we met with members of Alaska's congressional delegation and senior officials from the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Forest Service. Our discussions focused on securing federal support for several high-priority projects, including the replacement of our public water well field, lift station upgrades, ongoing cleanup of the Buckner Building, and next-phase work on Shotgun Cove Road.

We also highlighted Whittier's broader infrastructure needs—specifically, the replacement of the DeLong Dock, the importance of preserving the existing WRDA authorization for a small boat harbor at the Head of the Bay, and continued support for the Alaska Railroad land transfer.



Assistant City Manager Monthly Report

April 23-25 - AML Infrastructure Symposium - Assistant City Manager, Harbor Master and Public Works Director attended the symposium. Staff attended presentations and held conversations with key leaders from several State and Federal Agencies to discuss funding opportunities and program initiatives. All presentations can be found here <https://akfederalfunding.org/alaska-infrastructure-development-symposium/>

National League of Cities - City Administration Staff applied for an Advancing Economic Mobility Rapid Grant. The application submitted was for \$20,000 to help the City provide business development and management support for Whittier residents, existing businesses, and new businesses.

Buckner Building - Draft Workplan has been developed and provided to EPA. City staff is working on finalizing the workplan over the next few weeks. A draft RFQ to hire professional services to support the City with the Buckner Building cleanup and demolition has been drafted and reviewed by EPA technical assistance division. City staff will finalize the RFQ and advertise within the next two weeks.

FHWA Safe Streets for All - RFP has been drafted and is going through internal review. The RFP will be advertised in the next two weeks. Also working with FHWA to utilize the Waterfront Economic Development Plan as in-kind match, which will free up \$20,000 of City funds that was originally dedicated to this project for match.

Lease Analysis - Reviewing existing lease agreements, terms, and conditions. Purpose of this effort is to identify any lease violations and/or lease agreements that need to be renewed or updated.

Delong Dock - City staff is preparing a grant application to the MARAD PDIP program, requesting ~\$11.5 million to complete planning, design and preconstruction activities so the project shovel ready.

City Clerk Monthly Report

Please mark your calendars for the following upcoming events:

May 26. City offices closed in observance of Memorial Day.

May 27. Planning and Zoning Commission Work Session on the Table of Allowed Uses.

June 5. Port and Harbor Advisory Commission Regular Meeting.

The period from mid-April through mid-May was a full one for the Clerk's Office. Hiring and interviews moved forward for several positions, including a Fire Lieutenant, Seasonal EMTs, Seasonal Harbor Technician, and a Seasonal Harbor Assistant. Postings also went out for the Receptionist and Harbor Finance roles, and preparations began for the ALPAR Youth Litter Patrol team to start soon. The office continued working with Ramos HR Consulting to start transitioning recruitment and onboarding tasks. The monthly Employee Newsletter was also distributed to all staff. The Clerk's Office also facilitated the quarterly All-Hands Staff Training this month with strong participation across departments.

Progress continued on the cybersecurity grant and PCI compliance efforts. The Clerk's Office facilitated interviews, helped review draft policies, and submitted procurement requests to the granting agency of the cybersecurity grant. Support was also provided to the City's IT contractor, ACS, including ordering replacement computers, sourcing new batteries for backup systems, and troubleshooting vendor account access—a time-consuming but necessary process to keep operations running smoothly.

Work on long-term records management continued. A meeting was held with a potential contractor who could assist with indexing and prepping permanent retention files for scanning. In addition, research began into software platforms that could securely store digitized and electronic municipal records.

The City's new website went live on May 13, marking the completion of the transition from Sundog Media to CivicPlus. Content updates and cleanup are ongoing to ensure the new site is accurate and useful to the public.

Additional efforts included submitting documentation for the APEI insurance rebate, helping the Harbor Department secure a contractor to install LED lighting under the RE-VEEP grant, and gathering backup materials to support legislators preparing to present bills related to the Alaska Railroad Corporation land sale.

Support also continued for the Waterfront and Economic Development Plan, including communications between Corvus Design and the Project Advisory Committee and updates to the project webpage. Legal review of the draft election code revisions is still underway, and the Clerk's Office remained active in the Exhibitor/Sponsor and Publications Committees for the Alaska Association of Municipal Clerks.

Clerk's Corner: Taking It Back Off the Table

Last month, we cleared up a common myth: "*Lay on the Table*" isn't for postponing awkward topics or pushing things to the next meeting—it's used to **pause discussion temporarily** when *urgent business* arises that needs immediate attention.

But what if the emergency is over and you want to get back to the motion?

👉 Enter: "**Take from the Table**"

To resume consideration of something previously tabled, a member must move to *take it from the table*. Here's how it works:

- ✓ **Must be done before the end of the next regular meeting** (and since we meet at least monthly, that means you have until your very next meeting).
- ✓ **No debate allowed**—you go straight to a vote.
- ✓ **Requires a simple majority to pass.**
- ✓ **Any member can make the motion**—no need to have supported the original tabling.

🗣️ **How to say it:**

"I move to take the motion regarding [insert topic] from the table."

If adopted, you pick up right where you left off—whether that's mid-debate, mid-amendment, or just before voting.

⚠️ **Reminder:** If no one moves to take the motion from the table by the end of the next meeting, the motion **dies**. You'd need to introduce it again from scratch.

Pro tip: If the goal is to revisit something at a future meeting, it's usually better to **postpone** rather than **table**. But when something truly needs a pause, remember you've got a tool to bring it back—*properly*.

Finance Monthly Report

The finance department completed the annual audit fieldwork during the week of May 5 through May 9. This year's audit was performed with three fewer staff due to retirements, departures, and medical leave. The City qualified to undergo a standard State and Federal Single Audit due to the magnitude of expenditures related to the Lift Station No. 5 grant.

Staff secured additional funding for Shotgun Cove Road, including approximately \$2 million in additional US DOT FHWA funds, and \$920,000 from the Denali Commission which will be available to cover the City's required match for the Shotgun Cove Road Project. Staff will forward Resolutions to Council to appropriate grant funds for the project, prior to spending. In May, staff are finalizing the bid package to bid the next phase of Shotgun Cove Road construction.

Finance and Public Works staff are working with USDA to seek additional funds for the Well Field Replacement Project and hope to have the grant application submitted for federal review by month's end.

Since the departure of the Harbor Finance Officer, the Finance Director requested assistance from an outside contractor to analyze the configuration of harbor software to seek improvements and efficiencies, to support PCI compliance for the acceptance of credit cards, to develop a disaster preparedness and recovery plan, and to develop written procedures for various components of the harbor accounting system. The harbor has received notice that existing software is being phased out, necessitating an upgrade or change in billing software. The

analysis will develop options to reduce the number of non-integrated software programs used in the harbor, to simplify customer billing and collections, and improve system security. Other goals include: examining options that allow customers to pay bills online; improving internal controls; moving software to the Cloud to improve access, oversight and security; and to enhance data backup and disaster recovery. During this time, staff has also experienced significant challenges associated with complicated networking and software configuration issues that strengthen the case for software and hardware upgrades. The Harbor is also installing new pay stations due to the previous system no longer being serviced. This requires configuring new software and third-party payment providers.

Harbor Monthly Report

Administration

Rose's last day was May 2nd. She has moved on to a new job in Anchorage and she will be missed here at the harbor office.

Kyle and Sandra have done an outstanding job stepping into the harbor finance position in the interim which is paramount as we are deep into the 2025 audit process.

Rusty, our returning seasonal admin assistant, is back and ready to work. Great to have Rusty back in the harbor for the summer.

We are actively advertising to fill the Harbor Finance position with a closing date of 16 May. Summer is starting and we are already seeing a surge at the launch ramp and in the harbor.

We have been working closely with the harbor administrative consultant Michelle. She has been instrumental in detailing out all our harbor procedures to see if and where we may have areas of improvement to our current processes.

We are awaiting the arrival of the new IPS brand kiosks and hope to have them installed and operational prior to the Memorial Day holiday weekend. Patrons are using the PassPort app in the meantime.

Operations

Summer preparations are in full swing with the water on throughout the harbor and all of the docks.

New bearproof dumpsters have been deployed. There are complaints that they are tall and difficult to open due to the bearproof design. We will observe and look for ways to improve the dumpster experience.

The campground opened on 1 May. We do not have a dedicated Camp Host this year, however our Fire Chief Jason Cates will be supervising as available.

Harbor staff have responded/saved to multiple vessels that required dewatering over the past 30 days.

Harbor staff responded to an unreported diesel fuel spill in the vicinity of the launch ramp, WFD also responded. The National Response Center and ADEC were notified, and recovery efforts were not deemed possible due to natural dissipation.

Digital electrical meters have been purchased and are in production.

New signage is being installed throughout the harbor parking areas and restrooms to more clearly mark them for the public.

Public Safety

If you need to contact the police, fire or EMS please call (non-emergency):

Whittier: (907) 472-2340 Girdwood: (907) 783-3223 (Police) For all emergencies, please dial 9-1-1.

Police Monthly Report

On 4/30/2025 at 8:00am, Whittier Police, Fire and EMS transitioned to Valdez Police Department Center.

All 9-1-1 lines and business lines were seamlessly transferred with very few issues. We have also verified that 9-1-1 calls originating from cell phone carriers were also routed to our new dispatch center.

Valdez dispatch will also be monitoring and utilizing three Whittier radio channels. Police and Fire/EMS will be on separate radio frequencies and the third channel will be reserved for multiagency emergency communications.

We are still working on a few minor hiccups, specifically the integration of our software system with Valdez's software system. Both agencies have been working diligently with our respective software manufacturers to resolve this issue.

I am confident that we will have a solution to the integration soon.

With the separation of our dispatch center from Sitka, our normal statistical breakdown for calls for service will be delayed slightly. I anticipate the statistics will be completed by the end of the month.

I do have the total call for service for the month of April 2025:

- Girdwood Service Area calls for service is 314
- Whittier Service Area calls for service is 113

Personnel:

Lieutenant Joe Corbett has retired from the Whittier Police Department effective 5/12/2025. Joe has served the communities of Whittier and Girdwood for approximately 6 years and has successfully completed over 20 years of law enforcement service in the State of Alaska.

We wish him the very best in all his future endeavors.

Fire/EMS Monthly Report

In April 2025, Whittier Fire/EMS responded to 21 calls, including:

- **16 EMS Calls:** Addressing medical emergencies.
- **5 Fire/Hazmat Calls:** Managing fire and hazardous material incidents.
- **2 Calls to the BTI:**
 - A suspicious smell on the 9th floor.
 - Deployment of bear spray in the halls.
- **5 Walk-ins:** Individuals seeking assistance for minor medical issues.
- **0 Out-of-Service Area Calls:** All calls were within the service area.

In addition to emergency response, Whittier Fire/EMS engaged in several community initiatives:

- **State Fire Marshal Inspections:** Participated in inspections during the Fire Marshal's visit to Whittier.
- **Community Support:**
 - Assisted with food supplies due to known issues with the SNAP Program.
 - Provided 11 meals to individuals in need.
- **Health, Safety, and Job Fair:** Hosted an event on April 18th from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm at the Whittier School, offering job opportunities, volunteer positions, CPR certs etc.
- **Bike Safety Checks:** Conducted multiple checks at the school and the station to promote safety.
- **Cruise Ship Season Preparation:** Assisted with the wash down at the New Whittier Cruise Ship Terminal in anticipation of the 2025 cruise ship season.
- **Children's Lunch Box Collaboration:** Continued partnership to provide meals for children and less-fortunate community members.

These efforts reflect Whittier Fire/EMS's commitment to both emergency response and community service.



Public Works Monthly Report – no written report provided