

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

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

EPA Administrator Visit

The City of Whittier had the opportunity to host EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin and his staff for a focused site visit highlighting our top environmental priorities. The visit began with a briefing at the Public Works Building, where we provided an overview of the City's Brownfields program and key redevelopment efforts. Administrator Zeldin toured several critical sites, including the former Whittier School, Glacier Avenue properties, and the Buckner Building—Whittier's highest-priority brownfield site. This visit was a valuable opportunity to showcase the City's ongoing work and reinforce the importance of continued federal support in advancing cleanup and revitalization efforts.

Human Resources Transition

The City continues to work closely with Ramos HR as we transition and strengthen our human resources services. Over the past month, Ramos has initiated one-on-one meetings with department directors to better understand operational needs and priorities. This partnership supports improved onboarding processes, clearer HR protocols, and consistent employee support across all departments. We look forward to continued collaboration as Ramos becomes fully integrated into the City's administrative framework.

ARRC Real Estate Committee

Virtually attended the Alaska Railroad Corporation's Real Estate Committee meeting to remain informed on ongoing land use discussions. Continued participation in these meetings ensures the City remains engaged in regional planning efforts and aligned with evolving developments that may affect Whittier.

Mobile Planning & Zoning Work Session

Held a mobile Planning and Zoning Commission work session, offering an opportunity for on-site discussion and visual context for current land use topics. This format supported more dynamic engagement and informed decision-making. We hope to offer more of this type of interaction in the future to enhance participation from both the commission and the community.

Assistant City Manager Monthly Report

City staff continue to pursue and manage several key grant and planning initiatives. In April, the City applied for a \$20,000 grant through the National League of Cities to support outreach and technical assistance for local entrepreneurs. While the application was not awarded, feedback from NLC was received and will strengthen future submissions. The City has been encouraged to reapply in 2026.

The FHWA Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant agreement was successfully amended, extending the project timeline to December 31, 2026. The amendment also allows the City to use funds committed to the Waterfront Development Plan as an in-kind match, freeing approximately \$20,000 in local funding.

Planning efforts continue across multiple fronts. DOWL will be in Whittier the week of July 14 to begin data collection for the Transportation Master Plan, including the installation of traffic cameras and counters. Coordination is underway with DOT&PF and tunnel operators.

The RFP to hire a contractor for the SS4A Action Plan has been finalized and will be posted to the City website this month. Additionally, staff are preparing an RFQ to secure multiple contractors to support contaminated site cleanup and redevelopment efforts, including services in solid and hazardous waste management, land use planning, and climate adaptation.

City Manager and the Assistant City Manager will attend the National Brownfields Conference in Chicago from August 5–8. Travel and participation are fully funded through the EPA Brownfields grant. Attendance will support the City’s ongoing coordination of contaminated site cleanup and redevelopment efforts, including the Buckner Building.

City Clerk Monthly Report

Please mark your calendars for the following upcoming events:

June 19. City offices closed in observance of Juneteenth.

June 24. Planning and Zoning Commission Work Session.

July 10. Port and Harbor Advisory Commission Regular Meeting.

The Clerk’s Office continued to support seasonal hiring efforts this month, including onboarding for Harbor, Fire/EMS, and Youth Litter Patrol staff. In coordination with Ramos HR Consulting, the transition of HR responsibilities has begun, with an initial focus on recruitment and onboarding support. Efforts to overhaul the City’s records retention schedule remain a top priority; this month included progress on inventory and review of legacy files, including consolidation of miscellaneous archival materials stored in the Clerk’s office. The Clerk’s Office also played a coordinating role in early planning discussions between staff and the Chamber of Commerce for this year’s Fourth of July events. Additional duties included facilitating the public-facing portions of the Shotgun Cove Road Invitation to Bid and the Professional Services Request for Qualifications, ensuring compliance with procurement policies. Substantial work was also dedicated to reviewing draft cybersecurity policies alongside the City’s contractor to ensure alignment with federal requirements and best practices. The Clerk is concurrently preparing for the National Association of Parliamentarians membership exam after participating in a preparatory course. Draft amendments to the administration chapter of the City Code were also submitted to legal counsel for review. Ongoing responsibilities such as managing public records requests, supporting land use permitting, and maintaining the City’s website and social media presence continued throughout the reporting period.

Finance Monthly Report

This report reflects an abbreviated look at finance-related activities through the end of May, 2025, plus preliminary 2025 financial results through April 31, 2025. The financial results include the budgeted interfund transfers approved in the 2025 Operating Budget, plus all supplemental 2025 appropriations pending.

FINANCIAL ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

Personal Property Tax Collection

Following completion of the audit, the City begins the process of focusing on collections of past due personal property taxes, primarily involving vessels. There are a number of vessels parked in local storage lots that are not paying property tax, as well as some vessels currently located in the harbor and in Cliffside Marina. The City will make a final attempt at collections before terminating moorage contracts and pursuing additional means of collecting these past due taxes.

Seasonal Garbage Charges for Lessees

In accordance with WMC 8.20.060, the City began assessing the monthly fees for the collection, removal and disposal of garbage assessed to properties leased or subleased from the City, at the monthly rate of \$60. This is up from the prior years' rate of \$50. The Administration told the Council that it would be necessary to address additional harbor fees aimed at other harbor users, to assist with covering the cost of harbor trash, since in 2024, the Harbor paid \$140,507 in solid waste collection and disposal fees. The 2025 garbage fee is estimated to generate only \$7,500 in revenues for the Harbor, leaving more than \$133,000 to be covered by moorage fees.

Annual Audit

The annual audit has concluded, with the finance director working to develop a new Management Discussion & Analysis for inclusion in the annual financial report. This report utilizes a narrative format to explain key highlights from the City's annual financial activity with the aim of helping the public better understand the City's annual financial results. We expect the auditors to present the annual financial report at the Council meeting in July. Unfortunately, this year we will receive a significant deficiency for having poor internal controls over harbor financial transactions, again pointing to the need for material improvements in the harbor's financial system. The Harbormaster has full responsibility for addressing these deficiencies and developing meaningful solutions for improvement. It is very likely that the solution to these deficiencies will require material upgrades to the financial accounting hardware and software in the Harbor, as well as staff training.

GRANTS:

Federal Funds

Staff have spent the better part of a year working hard to apply for state and federal grant funds to support a number of very expensive initiatives, in the hopes of alleviating the burden on our small population, for major infrastructure upgrades. These efforts have paid off with the City being awarded significant grant funding, as described below.

With the help of our lobbyist Sebastian O'Kelly and Senators Murkowski and Sullivan, we received notice that our Shotgun Cove Road funding is no longer paused and as a result, we received a signed Grant Agreement from USDOT WFL FHWA awarding \$1,819,400 in additional funds for construction of the next phase of Shotgun Cove Road, from Mile 2.0 to 3.0. The Public Works Director is working with our engineering firm to finalize the bid documents with an aim for bid distribution in April 2025. This next project phase will allow access to reach necessary gravel material sources for constructing the road base, will open up access to beach, a beautiful trail area, and multiple campsites, moving the project closer to the goal of reaching Trinity Point, and ultimately allowing tie-in with US Forest Service Recreation Plan opportunities. For more information, visit www.shotguncoveroad.com.

Shotgun Cove Road

In the past few months, staff have successfully applied for and received \$1,819,400 in additional federal funding from USDOT Western Federal Lands Federal Highway Administration, for construction of the next phase of Shogun Cove Road, from Mile 2.0 to 3.0, in addition to receiving \$926,000 in Denali Commission FY25 Rural Surface Transportation Match/Gap Funding. The Denali Commission funding will provide the majority of matching funds to cover the City's matching requirements for this project. The construction bids are out for this project, with bids slated to close June 20. Assuming the bids come in within available funding, construction on the next phase of the project will begin as soon as possible.

Water Well Replacement Project

City staff have focused considerable effort in the past three years on seeking grant funding for this critical infrastructure project, which will replace the City's entire water well system with new water wells and related infrastructure. The State of Alaska DEC released their Intended Use Plan on June 10, showing that Whittier's drinking water project received the third-highest score, qualifying us for a \$3.5 million loan with full loan forgiveness. We have also been awarded an additional grant/loan from the USDA for this project, which may assist us in completing the project, depending on the final project bids. Because we have already gone out to bid on this project twice in the past two years – and failed to pursue the project due to high cost – we are prepared to go out to bid quickly, with the goal of having the project underway this construction season. These grant funds will be added to the \$1.23 million CDS funding provided to Whittier as a result of federal lobbying efforts and the efforts of Senator Murkowski.

Buckner Building

The assistant city manager has injected expertise and energy into gaining momentum on the Buckner Building project. A request for qualifications will be advertised soon, allowing the City to draw from expert assistance in mitigating contamination, strengthening public engagement, and developing a plan to remove asbestos and other harmful contaminants, followed by a roadmap for future building removal and reclamation of the site. Senator Murkowski is seeking additional funding of approximately \$430,000 to assist us in the next phase of this project.

Harbor Phase III Renovation Project

The Harbor Renovation Project is nearing final design and Harris Sand and Gravel ordered long lead time items, disposed of previous project debris, and is preparing to mobilize fully at the end of the busy summer season in Whittier. The City's harbor revenue bond issue was finalized on April 8, 2025 with the City receiving \$4,503,203.49 in bond proceeds, and the State has paid the City \$427,250 toward its first installment payment on their \$4.5 million municipal harbor grant; the project is fully funded and well underway.

Additional Funding for DEC 301H wastewater permit

The City was awarded a grant in the amount of \$325,000 to address testing and disposal of sludge, as part of the City's 301H wastewater permit waiver effort. CRW is currently in the process of conducting waiver studies, including data collection and review, and developing plans for sludge management and disposal. The grant will provide funding to complete a one-time pumping of community septic tanks and develop a strategy for sludge handling and management for six septic tanks. Funding will also be used to inform development of a 301(h) permit waiver renewal and CWA 401 water quality certification, as well as required discharge monitoring. The contracted engineering firm will develop a technical memorandum evaluating alternatives for wastewater disinfection,

including cost estimates, and identification of mixing and dilution zones that meet state regulatory criteria established at 18 AAC 70, including data collection, modeling, etc.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS THROUGH APRIL:

General Fund (Fund 01) Financial Analysis

Through April, 33% of the calendar year has expired. Given the focus on finalizing the annual audit, there are a few recurring transactions such as depreciation, which remain to be recorded through April. Budgeted interfund transfers have been recorded, as have new appropriations approved by the City Council. Excluding interfund transfers, General Fund revenues are at 13.2% of budget. This is largely because the City sees the majority of its tax revenues (sales and property tax) in Q2 and Q3. Compared with the same period in the prior year, revenues are up by approximately \$55,875, entirely due to the transition to year-round sales tax, where tax revenues are now received each month rather than awaiting the end of the quarter. In addition, ambulance fees through April are at \$18,825 versus \$0 in the prior year. Fire/EMS Chief Jason Cates is to be commended on final implementation of the ambulance billing system, which has been very successful.

Overall General Fund Expenditures and transfers-out are right on target at 32.5%. Through April, all departments are under budget in expenditures with the exception of Property & Facilities, which is right on target. Overall, revenues and transfers-in are lower than expenditures and transfers-out by <\$138,548> due to the timing of major revenues coming in during the busier summer months.

Water/Wastewater Enterprise Fund (Fund 50) Financial Analysis

Water and Wastewater Enterprise Fund revenues and transfers-in are at 23% of budget through April. Service charge revenues are lower than the previous year through April, by <\$8,823>; investment interest has yet to be recorded. Expenses are higher than budget at 44%, even though depreciation has yet to be recorded, largely due to large equipment repair costs and the recording of transfers-out early in the year.

Harbor Fund (Fund 51) Financial Analysis

Due to the departure of the harbor finance officer and a focus on the annual audit, the harbor monthly revenue transactions are yet to be recorded through April. The information has been transferred from the Harbor to Finance, and will be updated through May within the next two weeks. Given the pending Harbor Phase III Project, it is likely that when vessels are removed from the one-third of the harbor undergoing renovation, that it could have a material impact on revenues for the latter part of 2025, as well as in 2026. The Harbormaster will be asked to estimate the budgetary impact of this likely loss of moorage revenue, and we will bring this information before Council this summer.

Harbor expenditures and transfers-out are at 20% of budget through April.

Delong Dock Fund (Fund 53) Financial Analysis

The Delong Dock Fund has no financial activity recorded through April, with the exception of insurance costs. The Whittier Seafood bankruptcy proceedings have completed and the entity has been sold. It remains to be seen what assets will be liquidated to satisfy a portion of the City's claims for past due wharfage, moorage, and utilities. We will update the City Council as additional information comes forth.

Harbor Monthly Report

We are excited to announce that we have hired Aniva Turituri as the new Harbor Finance Officer. She is highly qualified in all things finance and has hit the ground running. Please drop by and introduce yourself and say hello.

The Harbormaster provided opening remarks for the Prince William Sound 2025 symposium held mid-May in the City Council Chambers. It was a well-attended event and allowed the Administration to provide a broad update on all the things going on in Whittier.

The Harbormaster provided a city-wide update to the Barry Arm monitoring team. Information on tourism numbers, ship visits and impacts of a possible tsunami event in Whittier was discussed.

The Harbormaster continues to engage with Harris Sand and Gravel regarding the Phase III rebuilding process. To date, piling drawings have been submitted and approved, dock casting has started to be poured, and electrical pedestals have been ordered.

RE-VEEP grant is ongoing; lights have been ordered.

Admin staff have been researching a new Marina management system that will place all our data and information in a cloud-based environment. This would include updating our Quickbooks program to the cloud as well. This migration will have many positive upgrades to include daily and historical backup safe from a local system crash and loss of data.

The Harbormaster is working on a summer newsletter for all things harbor related, anticipating having it out prior to 1 July.

The new NuCore digital electrical meters have arrived and are being installed on the pedestals as the weather permits. Once they are completely installed, a technician will come up and program the computer to initiate the system. In the meantime, the meters will act as an analog meter and report power used on the legacy analog meter.

New IPS kiosks have arrived and have been installed. The launch ramp location is up and operational; however, the office location had a faulty wire that required replacement. IPS sent a replacement wire, and both units are operational now.

We released approximately 125k coho fry at the end of May and will be receiving approximately 100k chinook fry mid-June.

The Whiskey float suffered damage in the area of stalls 27/28 when a deadhead log floated under at a hightide and then remained under the dock as the tide went out. Repair efforts are underway.

Crane inspection on the City Dock was completed on 11 June.

Weather has affected harbor and launch ramp usage over the past few weeks, and numbers have been lower than anticipated. The recent warming trend is expected to increase use.

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 Department:

For the month of May 2025, a total of 411 calls of services were generated through Whittier/Valdez Dispatch. Whittier generated 202 calls for service and Girdwood Area generated 209 calls for service. We are still working on fine tuning the software so we can provide better and more transparent calls for service breakdown.

Since the summer season and cruise ship season have begun, we have increased traffic, parking and security checks in Whittier and Girdwood service areas.

We urge the public to be cognizant of the areas they are parking in and follow any parking signs and placards.

We have received reports of black bears starting to make their presence known in the Girdwood and Whittier areas. Please exercise good judgement when encountering wildlife in both communities.

Whittier Police have recently received multiple calls regarding an aggressive black bear in the Portage Pass Trail area. Officers investigated this call and with the assistance of a US Forestry Law Enforcement Officer, Officers located the aggressive black bear, which was subsequently dispatched.

We would like to also remind residents and visitors to our communities to keep their campsites, boats and area clean of food and attractants that may invite bears into their areas. We wish everyone a fun and safe experience in our community.

During the May 2025 Whittier City Council Meeting, a question was asked regarding a public radio station in Whittier. Whittier residents/Visitors can access 650 AM KENI radio station in Whittier.

Fire/EMS Monthly Report

May was a busy and productive month for Whittier Fire/EMS, with a total of 27 Calls for Service, including:

- 17 EMS calls
- 7 Fire/Hazmat calls
- 1 Rescue
- 3 Walk-ins
- 2 Out-of-service area responses

Beyond emergency response, our team remained active in community engagement, training, and outreach:

Community Engagement

The department hosted successful community events, including a Spaghetti Feed and Pancake Feed at the station. Fire staff also prepared meals for the Whittier Community School graduation and the City Council meeting.

Additional outreach included a Free Pet Vaccination Clinic at BTI, participation in the Head of the Bay Clean-Up, and multiple fundraising car washes to benefit the Whittier Community School.

A school-wide fire drill was also conducted to support safety education.



Organized several Car Washes at the fire station, successfully raising funds to help purchase Skis for Whittier Community School.



Training & Interagency Support

Two members attended Live Fire Training in Kenai. Fire extinguisher safety training was also offered to the public. One off-duty Firefighter/EMT assisted Girdwood Volunteer Fire Department with a response on the Seward Highway.



Celebrated a first for Whittier, three cruise ships in port in a single day.



Ongoing Outreach

We continue our partnership with **The Children's Lunchbox** to fight food insecurity. In May, we provided **118 meals** to children and community members in need. Meals are available **daily from 9 AM to 5 PM at the Fire Station**.



City of Whittier
Fire/EMS Department
Yearly Statistics
2025



	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec											
	Time			Time			Time			Time			Time			Time			Shift				
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C		
EMS/Medical	5	1	1	5	1	4	5	6	5	2	11	4											
Fire	3			2			2			5		6	1										
Rescue				2			2			1													
Walk-In	1			2			3	2		4	1	3											
Transport out of Whittier					2	1		1	1	1	2												
After hrs call duty phone						1						4											
Out of Service Area							1					2											
Sub-total	0	8	1	1	10	1	1	9	0	5	11	5	2	20	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	9			12			10			21			27			0			0			0	
Community Outreach																							
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec											
	Time B	Time B	Time B	Time B	Time B	Time B	Time B	Time B	Time B	Time B	Time B	Time B											
Station Tours	2	7	8	11	25																		
Meals Provided	50	33	24	11	118																		
Other	1	5	6	8	9																		
Totals	53	45	38	30	152	0	0	0	0	0	0	0											

79 Total calls for service
8 Calls for cruise ship passengers
10% of all medical calls cruise ship related

Time
A - 0000-0800
B - 0800-1800
C - 1800-2400

Thank you to all the volunteers, supporters, and community members who help us serve Whittier with dedication and heart. We're proud to protect and support our unique Alaskan town.

Public Works Monthly Report

The Public Works and Water/Wastewater (W/WW) Department has made considerable progress over the past month, with ongoing seasonal transitions and critical infrastructure support, while also securing and utilizing several important funding sources.

One of the department's most impactful developments continues to be in grant acquisition. The City has now finalized a \$300,000 grant from the EPA through the Village Safe Water (VSW) program to fund two technical memoranda. These include a rough order of magnitude (ROM) cost assessment for debris removal from four septic cells and additional testing and treatment requirements for the 301H discharge permit renewal. CRW Engineering has been contracted to lead the permitting process and grant applications, as well as the design and preparation for settlement removal. The City also remains on schedule with required EPA quarterly reports and has commenced seasonal testing and discharge monitoring reporting (DMR).

In water infrastructure, the Water Well Improvement Project, supported by a \$1.23 million CDS grant, remains a top priority. The Water Department and Finance team continue to work toward securing a USDA grant/loan, in addition to exploring further funding through the VSW and State Revolving Fund (SRF) programs. These efforts are being supported by the City Manager and lobbyist, who are actively pursuing alternative funding channels. Moreover, Whittier has officially

received a \$75,000 grant from the EPA, ADEC, and SRF for the acquisition of a 100kVA emergency portable generator, with specification and solicitation documents currently in preparation.

On the construction front, the Shotgun Cove Road (SCR) project has reached a key milestone, with bid openings scheduled for June 20th for the section spanning Mile 2.0 to Mile 3.25. The City has successfully secured \$1.8 million in funding through Western Federal Lands, which, when combined with other sources, fully funds construction of the targeted segment. Additionally, the City has been awarded \$900,000 from the Denali Commission for gap funding, while a pending \$28 million Tribal Land Access Grant application remains under review.

Routine operations and seasonal transitions also advanced this month. Public Works completed the removal of snow markers, installation of summer signage, and the seasonal replacement of winter barriers. Thirteen bear-proof trash cans and five mural-decorated barriers were installed. Crews used 3 tons of asphalt to patch potholes across the city and repaired winter storm damage to the triangle breakwater, hauling and placing 280 cubic yards of fill and 100 cubic yards of surfacing rock.

Equipment maintenance was ongoing across departments. Public Works staff repaired winter equipment, replaced a forklift hose, addressed electrical and hydraulic issues on a skid steer, and repaired a grader cylinder. DPS performed preventative maintenance and minor repairs on cruisers, including diagnosing a transmission issue that required external repair in Anchorage. Fire and EMS personnel continued working through minor equipment deficiencies, and the fire engine was taken to Girdwood for annual certification testing.

Finally, planning is ongoing for the Whittier Core Upgrades project, which will include storm system replacements, utility extensions, pavement resurfacing, ADA-compliant sidewalks, right-of-way and easement validation, and resolution of various operational issues to support future city growth.