

CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT October 2023 General Meeting

- I attended the Southeast Conference Annual Meeting in Sitka. The Southeast Conference supports activities that promote strong economies, healthy communities, and a quality environment in Southeast Alaska. See the website for their mission and issues and industries they support. Here is their website: <https://www.seconference.org/annual/> I am including the meeting agenda as an attachment. If you have any questions about the presentations or subject matter, please let me know.
 - Of particular interest was Southeast Alaska by the Numbers presentation by Meilani Schijvens of Rain Coast Data. Interesting that Gustavus had one of the highest positive economic outlook percentages of SE cities. <https://www.seconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Southeast-Alaska-by-the-Numbers-2023-PPT.pdf> Not shown in this report but on the Business Climate Survey was that there were only 3 respondents to the survey from Gustavus. <https://www.seconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Southeast-Alaska-Business-Climate-2023.pdf> When I asked Meilani about it, and how those few numbers might it have skewed the data, she thought it might be a mistake and said she would look into it. For those who are interested in any of the conference presentations, they are located here: <https://www.seconference.org/2023-annual-meeting-presentations/>
 - Another item of interest was the Mariculture Cluster presentations. <https://www.alaskamariculturecluster.org/> Dan Lesh is now Deputy Director of SE Conference and heads up this initiative. He would like to come out to Gustavus to put on an informational presentation of the initiative – its outreach, innovations and successes. Bobbi Hudson, Executive Director of the Pacific Shellfish Institute would also likely be able to co-present with an overview of what shellfish mariculture looks like on the west coast. This is a perfect opportunity for the community to look at entrepreneurship and economic diversification in our region.
 - Electrical Rate increases were discussed after Curtis Thayer of the Alaska Energy Authority made his presentation.
 - I introduced myself to Craig Tornga, the new Director of AMHS, and we discussed schedules and the port fee nomenclature being updated on the website so that folks don't think the City of Gustavus is charging the fee. This has been accomplished and everyone who was charged double due to a programming glitch, should now be reimbursed. Mr. Tornga seems like a person who can hopefully steer the AMHS in a better direction by updating vessels through their Fleet Replacement Plan and recruiting crew members.
 - Alaska Airlines had their Regional VP in attendance as well as other employees. I discussed our ongoing support for Essential Air Service and indicated that I hoped they would extend their schedule until Labor Day next year.
 - I also met the new Commissioner of Natural Resources, John Boyle, who was talking about Municipal Land Allotments and how they intended to work with municipalities to expand availability. Among other items, I talked a bit with him about land acquisition in the boat harbor in between the two parcels currently under city ownership.
 - There was discussion on investing in SE in Rural Alaska communities and should our funds be used toward economic development or just to earn and grow?
 - The scholarship auction on Wednesday evening was quite enjoyable and if I remember correctly, they brought in over \$60,000, the amount of which is the highest ever raised.

- From there, I attended the Alaska Infrastructure Development Symposium in Anchorage. This event was co-sponsored by the Alaska Municipal League, The Alaska Federation of Natives and our congressional delegation. <https://akfederalfunding.org/alaska-infrastructure-development-symposium/>
 - Besides General sessions on planning and implementation progress there were regular plenary sessions with Bryan Fisher, Alaska DHS&EM – State and Local Cybersecurity, Randy Bates, Alaska DEC – State Revolving Fund and Thomas Lochner, Alaska Broadband Office.
 - There was a lively discussion on “Project Bundling” and how that might work, particularly in rural areas, in order to reduce construction costs for mobilizing and demobilizing projects. It’s a giant puzzle to figure this out but there is a group of folks at the governor’s office and various federal agencies committed to trying to figure it out. I mentioned they/departments would first have to streamline grant submittal and review schedules, NOFO’s, match requirements and barge and construction schedules if this were to be a successful endeavor.
 - Tuesday was an all-day session of concurrent exhibitors of various agencies who offer grants and guidance, data and technical support. I visited several agencies including staff from Senator Murkowski’s and Senator Sullivan’s offices. EPA folks were not as helpful as I was hoping and did not have the information that I was looking for about our SWIFR application. I am still following up on this. See above symposium link to view which subjects/agencies were available.
 - Wednesday had grant/project implementation work sessions. I attended several sessions:
 - Project Pre-Development for Grant Writing,
 - Benefit Cost Analysis 101 for Grant Writing. (Note to all – Hire someone to do this!)
 - Addressing Disadvantage and Equity in Grant Applications
 - Regional Transportation Plan session with ADOT Deputy Director of Planning and including our South Coast Planner, Sarah Cripe.
- Septage update – Trevor Richards told me they have mostly emptied the holding tanks and are super tied up in Juneau at the moment but hope to make another few trips out before winter.
- Senator Kiehl and Representative Story will be in Gustavus for a Town Hall on November 7th. 1:30 at the school and 5:30 at the library.
- Gustavus is now part of a group of municipalities working on a bundled application for a USDA Community Wildfire Defense Grant. (CWDG) Applications are due by October 31, 2023. AML intends to apply for a CWPP development grant which they will manage, track, and report. The purpose of this grant is to assist with mitigating the risk created by wildfires by creating a new or revising an existing (more than 5 years old) Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). Chief Martinez will be the primary contact for this process.
- Thanks again to Shelly Owens and all of our election volunteers who stepped up to assist with the election polls, paperwork and processes.
- We are still waiting to hear about being awarded a Cybersecurity Risk Assessment Grant via State Homeland Security and Emergency Management.
- We are still waiting for the Grant Award documentation for our CIP planning through Village Safe Water.