

CITY NEWSLETTER

City of Gustavus
April 23rd, 2026



City Council Members

Sally McLaughlin—Mayor
Lucas Beck—Vice Mayor
Renee Patrick
Justin Marchbanks
Karen Hutten
Mike Taylor
James Kearns

City Hall Staff

City Administrator—Kathy Leary
City Treasurer—Ben Sadler
City Clerk—Liesl Barker

Department Hours

City Hall—Monday -
Thursday 9am-3pm
907.697.2451

Library—
Monday 4p-7p
Tuesday- 9a-4p
Wednesday - Saturday 12p-4p
907.697.2350

DRC— *winter hours*
Tuesday, Thursday,
Saturday 11a-3p
907.697.2118

Community Chest— *winter hours*
Wednesday 11a-1p
Saturday 11a-2p
Drop of donations during any
open hours.

GVFD—24/7 and only a phone
call away (911)

UPCOMING MEETINGS

City Council Special Meeting Monday April 27, 2026 at 5pm **ZOOM ONLY**
Meeting Packet: [MEET-Agenda-8e6a2f95131042d1b8210c3ec93f8ff8.pdf](#)
Zoom Link: <https://tinyurl.com/3dz7dr3a>
Zoom ID: 515 501 9406 **Zoom Passcode:** 5512 **Zoom Tel:** 253-215-8782

City Council Work Session Monday May 4th, 2026 at 6pm

City Council General Meeting Monday May 11th, 2026 at 7 pm.

All are welcome to join in person at City Hall or via zoom. Agenda and packet information will be posted 5 days prior to the meeting.

Missed a meeting? View recordings of all meetings [here](#).

UPDATES

The City of Gustavus is pleased to announce the hire of Johan Janse van Rensburg as GFVD Fire Chief! Continued on page 3

Updated Tax Form

With the change to the City's tax ordinance providing for the retail sales amount of 3% to be added to all room sales, the City has updated its tax form to help you account for the tax remitted properly. All room sales reserved after January 1st 2026 are subject to the new tax structure.

The main change to the form that will affect anyone remitting room tax is line 9, which now is "Retail Sales Tax on Room Sales". If you are using the fillable version of the form, when you enter your room sales data, it will populate the 3% for you. If you are doing it manually, you will have to enter the 3% yourself in line 9.

What the City does not want is for you to enter 7% into line 4. The City needs everyone collecting room and retail sales tax to document these two amounts separately, and for ease we have created two lines, one for 3% collected from retail sales not related to room sales, and one for 3% collected from room sales.

The new form is on the [website](#), and in the near future we will be moving to webforms on the website to make the process easier for everyone involved. If you have any questions or need help understanding the change to the form or the new tax structure, please let me know.

Ben Sadler, City Treasurer - treasurer@gustavus-ak.gov

Xunaa Borough Update: Our final response brief was filed in Superior Court on Monday, April 20th. [It is attached here for your reading pleasure.](#)

We do not yet have a date for oral arguments in court, but we expect that will take place within a month or so. Following that, the Court will have up to six months to make a decision on the case.

Fish Box Flat Rate Tax Input Wanted

Dear Community of Gustavus,

The Fish Box Flat-Rate Tax is an important source of revenue for the city, which contributes to infrastructure and services that support our quality of life. Currently there is not a formal written policy and procedure to guide the implementation of the tax established and described in ordinance. Therefore, the City Council has decided to write that policy and procedure.

The goal of this policy and procedure is to make it as clear as possible which products are subject to the tax and to make compliance with the tax as easy as possible for businesses and their clients. Therefore, we need your help! We are seeking input from the community, especially those involved in charter fishing and fish processing, regarding any points of friction or confusion in the application of the Fish Box Tax. Please send your feedback to clerk@gustavus-ak.gov with the Subject line "Fish Box Tax". Please note that in this effort we are not rewriting the ordinance or seeking to establish any new taxes. Thank you for making Gustavus a wonderful place to live and for your willingness to help our community be the best it can be!

Best regards,

Vice-mayor Beck on Behalf of the Gustavus City Council

Septage Study If you are interested in commenting on the Final Engineering Report (PER) on Gustavus Septage Management improvements/alternatives use the link provided below to review. At some point we will need to have a work session or town hall on this issue, hopefully along with an ADEC representative. If this is an important issue for you I encourage you to review this document.

Link: [gst0001_20251230_ww_septagemgmt_per-final_unsigned.pdf](#)

As part of ADEC's Capital Improvement Projects program process, at some point VSW would like to receive a resolution from the City indicating its disposition regarding the alternatives and recommendations in the PER. We as a City are going to have to have a serious conversation about whether or not to take on water/wastewater authority – which will be expensive and beyond our current revenue stream.

Grant opportunity -

RurAL CAP Foundation exists to fund community-driven projects in rural Alaska through small grant awards. They provide rural Alaskan nonprofits and governmental agencies more funding opportunities so small projects don't go unfunded. Their awards support rural Alaska community development.

www.ruralcapfoundation.org

Business Climate Survey 2026

Greetings Team Gustavus! If you haven't seen it yet, the Business Climate Survey 2026 is out. Please complete or encourage businesses to complete it to help us get sufficient data for the report.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SEBizClimate2026>

All my best- Meilani Schijvens

Southeast Program Coordinator for Alaska Resource Education (ARE)

Alaska Resource Education (ARE) is looking to fill a Southeast Program Coordinator position.

This position is a Juneau-based role (with 25% SE travel) focused on K-12 STEM education centered on Alaska's natural resources. It's a part-time position (~20 hrs./week, with up to 40 hrs. on travel or event weeks) with the potential to grow to full-time as funding allows.

Key responsibilities include classroom teaching, building relationships with schools and community partners, and supporting fundraising and outreach efforts across Southeast Alaska.

Letters of Interest and Resumes can be submitted to info@akresource.org

Economic Impact of Arts in Southeast Alaska 2025 Survey

The Sealaska Heritage Institute and Southeast Conference are partnering to develop an economic impact analysis of the arts in Southeast Alaska. If you are a full-time artist, an every-other-weekend artist, or somewhere in between; an arts organization; or a business or organization that supports the arts, please take this census of artists in our region.

[Economic Impact of Arts in Southeast Alaska 2025 Survey](#)

Continued: The City of Gustavus is pleased to announce the hire of Johan Janse van Rensburg as GFVD Fire Chief

After lengthy debate and consideration of the applicants and their credentials, the GVFD Fire Chief selection committee is pleased to announce that our concluding decision was to promote from within the GVFD. Johan's specific knowledge of our department's operations, current projects, internal culture, and commitment to community engagement, more closely matches the needs of the GVFD organization at this time. He has emphasized that the department is like a family that needs to support one another.

The GVFD Fire Chief recruitment period lasted 5 weeks. The selection committee was comprised of 2 council members, the City Administrator, a GVFD volunteer, and a currently working fire chief from SE Alaska. Prior to the interviews, the committee met to review the applications and formulate interview questions to ask the candidates.

Johan will be responsible for directing the day to day operations for the GVFD, and will focus on overall department readiness.

As many of you know, Johan has been filling in for the last 6 months as Interim Fire Chief. He has been a volunteer responder for the last 10 years. He is a member of Team Rubicon – a non-governmental organization specializing in disaster response. Johan is committed to managing the GVFD efficiently, and in continuing the momentum in the department's transition which, together with the EMS Coordinator, includes building a strong response team. To that end, please note that all 6 Gustavus Firefighter I students who recently participated in the FFI hybrid class through UAF, completed the course, and successfully passed the State of Alaska Practical Skills testing. They are now awaiting the results of the State of Alaska written exam. EMS Coordinator, Leah Okin, recently taught classes for 7 EMT I's and 9 ETT's. Collectively, in order to elevate department capabilities, they will enable training and certification opportunities for volunteer responders and dispatchers using training protocols aligned across both fire and medical disciplines as they continue to engage in community outreach. Optimally, this collaboration will result in improved patient outcomes, increased responder safety, and standard operating procedures. Go Team!

Please give a warm welcome to Johan as GVFD Fire Chief as he begins this vital role serving our community.

Not receiving the City Newsletter, email clerk@gustavus-ak.gov to be added.