

Mayor's Report

May 8, 2023, General Meeting
(Drafted May 2, 2023)

Once again, it's been a busy month at City Hall with projects getting underway, FY 24 budget preparation, grant applications being processed, and employee changes.

Clerk Position. We thank Karen Platt for her over five years of excellent service as City Clerk. We are sorry to see her go but wish her the best in her new employment with the National Park Service. We continue to advertise for a replacement Clerk and will consider a short-term interim position if we don't have a candidate who is available to start during the summer. In the meantime, Treasurer Ben Sadler and Fire Chief Sol Martinez are covering the City Clerk duties. Sol works up the packets and Ben serves as Clerk during Council meetings. Thank you, Sol and Ben!

Marine Facilities Coordinator Position. It's a pleasure to welcome Larry Platt to employment with the City of Gustavus as Marine Facilities Coordinator, starting June 1. Larry has a great skill set for this job with experience on the Alaska Ferry system and as a private boater, and years of maintenance and construction work. Welcome Larry!

Playground Equipment Project. Thanks to the Grades 2-5 Gustavus School students and their teacher Ms. Karen McSpadden, plus Vice Mayor Kyle Bishop and Council Member Janene Driscoll for help selecting equipment from the three manufacturers. All the proposals offered exciting equipment so it was hard to narrow down the choices, but the students focused on one large climbing structure with a double slide and a three-person spinner that can accommodate children with restricted mobility. The Council decides this month on an appropriation of \$39,000 to cover the equipment purchase, freight, construction of an extended gravel pad and equipment installation. We hope to have enough for some extras like an accessibility ramp and benches for adults who may come to watch the children. We plan to order the equipment by June and install later in the summer.

Library Bike Shelter Project. We have discussed with Matt Davis of Terra Construction and Design the construction plans for the bike shelter. Matt has suggested a few options to enhance the structure and will be pricing them for us. We hope to issue a notice-to-proceed shortly. John Barry, PE, is the project manager.

Heat Pump Installation at City Hall. We are grateful for the donation by the manufacturer Mr. Cool of the heat pump system for City Hall. Dean Weikle and I enjoyed the "DIY installation—*Dean did most of the work!* We hope to finish the installation shortly when John Nixon wires the power to the system.

Beach Hardened Trail Project. With award last month of the project to Glacier Bay Construction Co, Project Manager John Barry has issued the notice-to-proceed. The trail is a high priority for construction early this season. Council Member Janene Driscoll has researched beach-capable wheelchairs, walkers, and strollers and is preparing to recommend to the Council that the City purchase of one each to extend the accessibility of the beach to include even the sandy beach strand along the tide line. They would likely be sheltered in a small structure on the Bulk Fuel Facility tract near the beach restrooms and to be easily available to all potential users.

Septage Storage Tank Installation Project. Frontier Freight delivered the two 10,000 gal septage storage tanks the City purchased from a Juneau firm for installation at the DRC in April. The successful bidder on the contract to install the tanks is Glacier Bay Construction Co. Project Manager John Barry, PE, has issued the NTP for construction. I'll be assisting John with project monitoring while John is out of Gustavus. This project is a high priority as it will enable a resumption of septic tank pumping service for Gustavus customers. We plan to have the tanks in service by early summer.

Road Maintenance. Spring has been cool and wet, slowing the post-winter reconditioning of our gravel roads. Recently dry days have enabled some roads to be graded and Glacier Bay Construction will be doing more grading and laying new gravel this month. When they are caught up on road restoration, they will begin the five cul-de-sac improvement projects described last month.

Gustavus Volunteer Fire Department Radio Tower Project. Project Manager John Barry, PE, has issued the notice to proceed for construction to Glacier Bay Construction Company. The tower has been stored for over a decade at the DRC since its original purchase for installation at Falls Creek. Construction is scheduled this summer behind the Fire Hall.

Health Fair. We all owe a big thank you to Fire Chief Sol Martinez for organizing the successful Health Fair on April 29. Thanks also to the travelling staff from the Alaska Health Fair; local and Juneau SEARHC Clinic staff under the leadership of Kelly Warren; Coleen Stansbury, PA, for Hospice; GVFD volunteers; Library volunteers; and representatives from Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL) and AWARE who provided information tables and other support. SEARHC contributed the Community Center rental fee. Residents lined up for blood pressure checks and screening blood draws. SEARHC provided information on services available at the new clinic including an expanding set of specialty services using providers from the Juneau and Sitka clinics. Early in the afternoon SEARHC hosted tours of the new Clinic. Let's plan for an even bigger and better event next year to support the health of Gustavus residents.

AWARE Informational Meeting. Sunday evening April 30 Swarupa Toth from the Juneau-based AWARE agency met with 16 concerned Gustavus residents at the Gustavus Community Center to describe AWARE services and the measures that we can take in Gustavus to prevent and respond to cases of abuse of vulnerable people, particularly young folks. Swarupa outlined the pattern of tactics typical of abusers and described the services that can be accessed through AWARE, including development of safety plans for vulnerable victims. Swarupa also met with GVFD responders earlier in the day to train them to deal with apparent abuse situations during EMS calls. Swarupa agreed to compile a list of strategies the City can take to establish safe and healthy environments that prevent abusive situations from developing in the first place. Information and establishing community standards of respect will be key features of the strategies. AWARE can offer expanded training of interested local volunteers for both preventative measures and response activities. Many meeting attendees expressed interest in taking the training and serving our community. Follow-up meetings will be planned. Thanks to Swarupa Toth for coming to Gustavus and giving her time for the presentation. Thanks to Tania Lewis, Britney Cannamore, Stacy Proctor, and Coleen Stansbury for organizing these meetings and for their continued leadership on behalf of Gustavus. Thanks to the Community Center for hosting the meeting. We will be a healthier community for their efforts.

PFAS monitoring. Shannon & Wilson Technicians were in Gustavus the first week of May to sample monitoring wells and some private wells for PFAS compounds under contract from the Alaska

Department of Transportation and Public Facilities. The City also contracted with the firm to sample the wells serving City Hall, the Fire Hall, the Public Library, and the Community Garden. The field technicians sampled raw water from the wells and the treated water at the City buildings that has passed through water softeners and carbon filters. Before the sampling we changed out the filter elements on the building systems and the reverse osmosis element at City Hall. Combined with groundwater monitoring well samples taken for DOT&PF, the sampling effort at City facilities will help us understand both the level of contamination at city wells and potentially the effectiveness of existing treatment systems in reducing PFAS concentrations at the taps. We will report the results of the sampling when they are received in about five weeks.

Old Post Office Building Renovation. Kenn Magowan has signed an agreement with the City to renovate the Old Post Office Building (we still need a new name for it!) to serve as the base for his planned bike repair shop. It's wonderful to have Kenn's interest and dedication in restoring the WW2-era building's appearance and function for a new life chapter. Watch for Kenn's opening later this year.

Alaska Power and Telephone Visit. Jason Custer, Vice President of AP&T, our electric utility, visited Gustavus April 25-26 to meet with Council Member Jim Mackovjak and me to discuss potential partnerships to encourage carbon-reducing electrification, alternative generation, and reduced electric rates as Gustavus grows. We hiked the Hydro Road together, visited the AP&T back up generator facility, and met with Jake Ohlson at his NPS office at Bartlett Cove. In that meeting Jake outlined NPS interests and plans for electrifying ground transportation, heating, other appliances, and eventually even boats. Expanding sales of electric power to the Park will spread the fixed costs of our electric generation and distribution system across more kilowatt hours, which will hold costs down for Gustavus rate payers. We discussed ramping up alternative generation capacity step by step as electric demand grows. Thanks so much to Jason Custer for his visit and his continued interest in Gustavus's prosperous electric future.

Grant Application Disappointments. We learned last week that our initial grant applications to the Alaska Department of Transportation for repairs to the Good River Bridge and for planning and design of the Bike Path along Gustavus Road were not successful. We are evaluating how our applications scored and planning to re-submit applications for other infrastructure grant opportunities as they arise. Our projects may not have competed with other applications due to the specific intents of those specific grant programs. Other grant opportunities may better fit our projects, and we will continue to seek funding for them. We win some, we lose some, but we keep trying. I am ever grateful for the hard work and determination of City Administrator Kathy Leary in pursuing outside funding for our larger infrastructure projects.

Happy spring to all,

Mike Taylor
Mayor, City of Gustavus