

Mayor's Report
For July 17, 2023, General Meeting (updated July 18)
Mike Taylor

June and early July have been joyfully busy in Gustavus with the start of summer and visitor season. City Hall has been active with people coming in for boat stickers, business licenses, storage payments, sales and room tax payments, civil work permits, general information, and notary service. It's a pleasure to serve our community. Thanks to the City Hall Staff of Kathy Leary, Ben Sadler, and Charity Smith, with help from Fire Chief Sol Martinez and Marine Facilities Coordinator Larry Platt for helping customers.

Paul Berry's retirement celebration drew a crowd to the Salmon River Park on July 1. It was a great turnout to celebrate Paul's huge and visionary contribution to our community as the driving force for the DRC. Under Paul's leadership our DRC has become a model as the best small-town landfill and recycling operation in a small town in Alaska. It is truly a source of pride for us all. Thank you, Paul!

Clerk Position Reopened for Applications. The Council approved of Charity Smith to fill the City Clerk Position last month and she was sworn in at the special meeting June 26. However, after returning from her family commercial fishing trip, she decided that the position was not right for her after all and asked on the morning of July 17 to be relieved of it. We are sorry are sorry not to be able to proceed with her, but we respect her decision. I thank Charity for her service over the last couple months in the temporary position at the front desk. We have re-posted the position for applications effective July 17 and encourage any interested and qualified candidates to apply.

Marine Facilities Position filled. Larry Platt is now in the job as Marine Facilities Coordinator and has been busy keeping things in order at the Salmon River Harbor, float system, and Beach Park. Welcome Larry and thanks for diving into the serving our users of these vital facilities. Larry has also picked up some maintenance chores, such as mowing the grass at the old Post Office before the Fourth of July.

Septage Storage and pumping. The City's installation of two 10,000-gallon septage storage tanks at the DRC site was completed in June and Juneau Septic Pumping Service has since been out at least four times to pump tanks of residences and businesses who have long been on a waiting list. The system is working well. Juneau Septic brings their small pumper here for a few days at a time between ferries. The operator pumps tanks and transfers the pumped contents to the storage tanks. It returns to Juneau on the ferry with a full load of 2000 gal. Then they bring over their larger, 4000 gallon- capacity truck on the ferry and load it from the DRC while the ferry is at the dock and then reboard the ferry to return to Juneau with the septage from about 4 tanks. The contents are discharged to the Juneau septage system for processing. The septage storage tank system has enabled Juneau Septic to get a good start on the backlog of septic tank pumping orders here. In addition to quite a few residential and business tanks, the service has pumped the City's vault toilets at Salmon River Park and the Beach Park. City Administrator Kathy Leary has issued News email notices reminding residents wishing to order service to contact Juneau Septic at gustavusseptic@gmail.com.

Fourth of July Celebration was a great success. We enjoyed another glorious Independence Day this year with festivities centered at the Salmon River Park. We all owe a big Thank-You to Robynn Jones for organizing the events this year. Thanks to the GVFD volunteers for hosting the ever-popular Firehall barbecue lunch. Thanks also to the public-spirited work crew from the LDS church for cleaning and trimming up the park ahead of the retirement party for Paul Berry and the Independence Day

celebration. And thanks to Meadow Brook, Ann Wildman, and garden volunteers for planting flowers in the flower beds. Jen Landry grew the plants and prepared flower baskets for the Park and other City sites around town. They all made our town look great in time for the busiest time of the year!

Road maintenance work also prepared us for the busy Fourth. Thanks to Glacier Bay Construction for getting our roads in shape, enabled by just enough rain to dampen the gravel and the new FY2024 budget year funding. Thanks Justin and Ponch!

Salmon River Park play equipment has been ordered! We have made good progress on meeting the vision of the Karen McSpadden’s Gustavus School classes who visited City Hall last fall to lobby for an expansion of the existing park equipment to serve bigger children. They reviewed proposals by three manufacturers and from their comments we chose products from Exerplay as proposed by their Alaska representative Karl Croft in Anchorage. Thanks to Vice Mayor Kyle Bishop and Councilmember Janene Driscoll for helping weigh the exciting options. And thanks to Morgan Park for advising us on the color palette for the new equipment.



Not shown in the drawing is the blue and yellow “Revi-spinner” we are also ordering. We placed the order with Exerplay. There will be about a 12-week manufacturing and shipping period. I hope to install the equipment in early fall. We will put out a request for quotes to contractors for the installation soon.

Hydro Road Access. David Olney of the Beartrack Inn kindly dropped by to discuss with me his reasons for posting the Falls Creek Hydro Road as a “Private Road” and “No unauthorized access.” In David’s view, the easement is not public and is for utilities only. In support of restricting public access, David cites an incident of vandalism of his new garage at the start of the road last year and another incident in which joy riders on ATVs raced up and down the road loudly and annoyingly one evening. He also cites concerns about liability and that with community growth the road will “become a freeway.” He says people can sign his permission form and have access for 90 days.

I responded that in my view the public has been granted access up the Hydro Road by the power company since construction as is required by the permit issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and as assured in the FERC-approved Recreational Plan. It’s essential to the license

for the project. Incidents cited had nothing to do with recreational users of the road, who drive or walk up the road respectfully as provided for by the Recreation Plan. Also, the easement that Olney's sold to the power company has terms in which AP&T must hold the Olneys harmless and defend them against any claim for injury or accident on the road by users of the road. I offered to promote to the public that users of the road must respect, not trespass on or impact adjacent properties as they use the road, but I do not agree that members of the public must ask permission or be bound by the terms of the Olneys' permission form. We cordially agreed to disagree on whether the public has a right to use the road respectfully as I described. I appreciated David's visit and I wish him the best for a successful summer season at the Beartrack Inn.

PFAS sampling will continue in July. Over the last week, technicians from Shannon & Wilson Inc completed another round of sampling for PFAS compounds in monitoring wells around Gustavus under their contract with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF). At the same time, they once again sampled the water systems of City facilities—City Hall, Fire Hall, Library, and the Community Garden. The first round of sampling in May did not find any PFAS compounds in concentrations that exceeded even the very strict EPA-proposed maximum limits for drinking water systems. Indeed, PFAS compounds in most of the May samples were non-detectable. Nevertheless, I have contracted second and third rounds of sampling in July and October to check for seasonal variation and to be more confident that water in City facilities meets EPA standards. I will report the analytical results as soon as they are available.

Beach Park Improvements and issues. Thanks to folks, who prefer to be anonymous, for building the nice benches to complete the newly constructed fire pit at the Beach Park. The park is now more accessible with the new hardened trail and campfire site constructed by Glacier Bay Construction a month ago. Marine Facilities Coordinator Larry Platt monitors the park, cleans up trash and services the restrooms. He constructed a second campfire pit at a site in the trees, a site that is more wind-protected and has had informal use in recent weeks. By constructing the rock fire surround Larry made it safe to have fires there without concern that they would spread into adjacent vegetation. We are happy to make the second campfire site available for public use.

We continue to be disappointed that a few folks carelessly disregard the prohibition of motor vehicle traffic off road in the park. On the night of July 16 vandals stole signs, dog waste bag supplies, and posts recently installed there. In June I appealed for respect of the no motor vehicles rules with photos of serious ruts cut through vegetation in June. Some folks have also spray-painted logs and vegetation. It is sad to see damage to a natural area that the public asked to designate and protect as a public park. We continue to repair damage as possible, but it does cost money that would be avoided if everyone would respect the community value of the Beach Park. We are logging evidence of such activities and have asked the Alaska Troopers for assist in deterring disrespectful and damaging activities. We want everyone to be able to enjoy the natural character of the park and hope not to need to take legal action against vandals. Our community is the largest in Alaska without a local police function. We can be proud of that. I'd like to keep it that way, but we all need to respect community rules and be considerate of each other if that is to continue to be the case. Please, let's all enjoy the park without impacting its character and beauty for others who visit after us.

Mike Taylor
Mayor