



CITY & BOROUGH OF WRANGELL
INCORPORATED MAY 30, 2008

OFFICE OF THE BOROUGH MANAGER

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MEMORANDUM

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE
ASSEMBLY CITY AND BOROUGH OF WRANGELL**

**FROM: MASON F. VILLARMA INTERIM BOROUGH MANAGER/FINANCE
DIRECTOR**

SUBJECT: MANAGER'S REPORT

DATE: January 9th, 2024

11-MILE ZIMOVIA HIGHWAY LANDSLIDE RECOVERY & RESPONSE

Our community has been in the process of recovering from the 11-Mile Zimovia Highway landslide, a significant event that demanded comprehensive response efforts. The reopening of the highway on December 22, 2023, marked a significant milestone achieved by the State of Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT). Their month-long right-of-way clearing, and construction initiative successfully addressed immediate concerns. However, due to environmental conditions and time constraints, the planned road paving was postponed, with a revisit scheduled for the upcoming spring. We view this as an opportune time to advocate for the DOT to send an asphalt plant, aligning with our broader Borough road projects priorities.



On the financial front, our application for FEMA-PA (Public Assistance) is pending a determination. We have diligently submitted all landslide-related expenses by category to both the State of Alaska Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and FEMA. Anticipating a total expenditure of \$550,000 directly related to the landslide response, we are awaiting a FEMA decision. Simultaneously, we have initiated an ongoing effort to collect data utilizing advanced technology, including drones in-the-box and weather stations deployed by the DOT. The intention is to craft a strategic plan for disseminating this data and conducting subsequent analysis to inform future decisions and preparedness measures.

MURKOWSKI AND PELOTLA VISITS

U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski and U.S. Representative Mary Peltola visited our community on December 20th and December 29th, respectively. This provided a unique opportunity for Borough senior leadership to articulate our needs directly to our federal representatives. During these visits, we emphasized the critical necessity for an investment in our public safety-related projects, specifically drawing attention to the 11-Mile Landslide site. Both members of the Delegation engaged with our first responders and search and rescue volunteers, garnering first-hand accounts of their experiences during the landslide. This direct interaction not only facilitated a deeper understanding but also laid the foundation for potential collaboration in fortifying our community against future natural disasters.



TOURISM INITIATIVE

Looking ahead, Kate Thomas, our Economic Development Director, and I have a meeting scheduled with members of the Cruise Line Agency of Alaska (CLAA) on Thursday, January 11th. The primary focus of this meeting will be to discuss tour season calendars for CY24/25/26. Simultaneously, we aim to convey Wrangell's vision for sustainable tourism growth. This conversation extends beyond mere scheduling, delving into how CLAA or other private cruise lines can invest in our community while safeguarding the quality of life for Wrangell residents. As we navigate this delicate balance, we are keen on fostering partnerships that contribute to economic development without compromising our community's well-being.

GOALS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

As we enter the new budget year, we have undertaken a proactive approach by instructing all department directors to articulate their mission and goals. This collaborative effort serves as the cornerstone for strategic budgeting and aids in developing the Borough's overarching strategic plan. The first draft of this strategic plan is anticipated to be produced in February, and it will be instrumental in guiding our future initiatives.

Within the Borough Manager's office, specific goals have been outlined for the upcoming year. We are committed to formulating a comprehensive 5-year strategic plan in collaboration with department directors. Simultaneously, we are embarking on the rewriting of the Emergency Operations Plan and Hazard Mitigation Plans, leveraging both State and Federal resources. Our focus extends to the successful execution of property sales, including the Old Hospital and Alder Top Phase I (Former Institute Property).

Project-wise, we are actively advancing critical infrastructure initiatives such as the Wrangell HS/MS Roof and Siding, water treatment plant construction, swimming pool siding columns completion, harbor security camera installation, McKinnon road project, and SWTS Loading Dock Construction.

To enhance collaboration, I propose monthly meetings with Assembly Members in pairs. This structure is designed to facilitate meaningful dialogue, ensuring that our organizational performance aligns with the goals set for the betterment of the City and Borough of Wrangell.

WATER TREATMENT PLANT PROJECT UPDATE

Our Water Treatment Plant project is progressing with a few challenges on the horizon. We are working closely with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to secure a Build America, Buy America (BABA) waiver for materials. The rigorous review process for this waiver is estimated to take up to 12 weeks before a notice to proceed is granted. Concurrently, our contractor, AWC, has proactively purchased materials totaling \$3,442,890. AWC has requested a 25% payment (\$860,772) for these components. The urgency lies in the fact that any delay in payment could result in AWC pulling our project from production in 2024. The BABA waiver is crucial, allowing the Borough to be reimbursed for the materials ordered. However, if the waiver is denied, the Borough may need to cover the costs independently of the State and Federal resources allocated for this project. Assembly guidance is needed on this issue.

WINTER MAINTENANCE INITIATIVES

The Borough has been fortunate to experience unseasonably mild weather, leading to a lack of snowfall. This unique circumstance has allowed us to reallocate resources typically earmarked for snow plowing to essential maintenance projects. The Harbor Department, taking advantage of this weather window, is actively reconstructing the fence line in the auxiliary marine service center lot. Concurrently, Wrangell Municipal Light and Power has undertaken the rewiring of marine service center lighting and has procured materials to extend power to the shooting range. The Public Works Department is proactively addressing potholes and is in the planning phase for an array of summer maintenance projects.

TRIDENT SEAFOODS DEVELOPMENT

A significant development in the regional economic landscape is Trident Seafoods' decision to sell its Ketchikan and Petersburg plants. This leaves the Wrangell plant as the last operational plant in southeast Alaska, presenting both opportunities and challenges for our community. In response, we are actively engaging with Trident management to strategize housing opportunities and support the expansion of their operations within Wrangell. This collaboration is crucial for economic development and positions our community as a key player in the regional seafood industry.



Your continued support and engagement in these critical initiatives are paramount as we navigate the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. I remain at your disposal for any further clarification or discussion on these matters.

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Sincerely,

Mason F. Villarma

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