

## **Alakanuk Activity Report**

Leroy Seppilu, LGS/RUBA, Anchorage Regional Office

### **General Information:**

The Alakanuk Water & Sewer Utility Project has been officially closed by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), Village Safe Water Program. All the contractors for the water & sewer utility project have pulled out of the community. There are only a few more residential buildings that need to be moved from the erosion areas this summer. Alakanuk Traditional Council officials said they plan to move them after breakup.

RUBA's eight years of involvement with Alakanuk will continue as the final phases of the project come on-line. We will keep monitoring operations, management and finances of the utility until it is clear that everything is working well. Alakanuk can be considered an example of a successful utility that has met the challenges. They are due a hearty congratulations!

After advertising for a long time, the City Council hired a new city administrator. The city clerk/acting administrator, Josie Stern, accepted the position. Ms. Stern is qualified for the job as she demonstrated while being the acting administrator for the last several months. The city is now advertising for a city clerk.

Pati Crofut, a computer software program (Quickbooks Pro 99) trainer, and Leroy Seppilu, Anchorage RUBA staff, went to Alakanuk to train the acting city administrator and city bookkeeper on Quickbooks Pro 99 use. RUBA staff went there mainly to observe. The administrator and bookkeeper went through a full three-day training. They will receive at least a couple of weeks of telephone support from Ms Crofut. Ms Crofut will be traveling there again on April 18-21 to provide at least two full days of training.

### **Observations and Recommendations:**

**Finances** — The city has managed to save at least \$70,000 from sales tax revenue over the last several years. The savings account was opened about 3 or 4 years ago at the recommendation of the VSW engineer, Kurt Egelhofer. 25 % of the sales tax revenues collected has been placed in this account. The city also has at least \$62,000 in the water & sewer utility account. RUBA staff has recommended to the acting administrator to charge bookkeeper and administrator wages to water & sewer utility account whenever water & sewer utility department business has been done.

**Accounting Systems** — Pati Crofut, an accountant contractor for RUBA, has installed Quickbooks Pro 99 software program and has started training the administrator and bookkeeper with its use. The accounting software will be used for the city's financial reports, payroll, payroll taxes, bookkeeping, accounts receivable and payable, billing water

& sewer utility customers, etc. The administrator and bookkeeper are impressed with the ease of using the accounting software.

Tax Problems — The bookkeeper has an excellent control over this. All payroll taxes and reports are submitted on time.

Personnel System — The city clerk/acting administrator has accepted the position of the city administrator. The council had been advertising the administrator position for quite some time. The mayor had been encouraging her (Josie Stern) to take the position. She is very qualified for the position.

Organizational Management — The bookkeeper and the administrator get along very well. They work closely together and cover for each other when one or the other is absent. RUBA staff hasn't seen it this good in Alakanuk in a long time.

Leadership/Governance — Thanks to the encouragement of Mayor Alstrom and others, Josie Stern accepted the city administrator position. Josie is very strong-willed and deliberate person. She should do very well with this challenging job.

Operation of Utility — According to the new city administrator, the water & sewer utility department has nearly 100% collection of its water & sewer utility bills. She said if a water & sewer utility customer gets behind on paying his/her bill, she calls him/her up and discusses the bill with the customer. Apparently, the customers promptly pay their bills after this consultation.

**Ranking**

1 = Inadequate

4 = Adequate to meet minimum requirements

7 = Exceeds requirements

Category	1	4	7
Finances			X
Accounting Systems			X
Tax Problems			X
Personnel System			X
Organizational Management			X
Leadership/Governance			X
Operation of Utility			X