

Gambell Activity Report

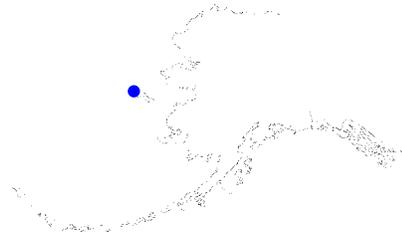
Community Overview

Lead RUBA Staff: Josie Morrow, Nome Office

2000 Census Population: 649

Region: Bering Straits

Local Governments: Second Class City



The City of Gambell operates the piped water & sewer system and provides a central watering point. The City also provides a honeybucket haul service. The City Council is the policy making body for the utility.

Water is derived from wells and Troutman Lake, is treated and stored in three storage tanks. 116 homes are now connected to the piped water and sewer system. The schools and washeteria have individual water wells and septic tank systems. 37 homes in the original townsite still haul water and honeybuckets. A Master Plan is underway. A new water source is needed to ensure no shortages will occur. The landfill is not permitted; the City wants to develop a new site.



General Information

Telephone assistance by Nome RUBA/LGS Josie Morrow was provided this quarter to the Utility Clerk to help her properly record refunds to customers and to reconcile payroll history in QuickBooks Pro. Josie also advised her on collections of past due accounts.

The City sent the Utility Clerk and one Council Member to the Utility Personnel Management workshop held in Nome the week of May 21st. This week long workshop was sponsored by the RUBA Program and Norton Sound Health Corporation, Office of Environmental Health.

Observations and Recommendations

Finances — The Utility has approximately \$20,000 in interest bearing accounts for contingencies.

The City continues to carry its workers compensation and liability insurance with AML/JIA and is current with all premiums.

This past quarter, as well as the current quarter, collections on customer accounts were low due to a cash shortage in the village. Severe weather conditions caused many planes to cancel flights onto St. Lawrence Island. The local store was taking customer paychecks and other governmental checks and, rather than tender change, would put the money on account for the customer's future purchases at the store. Consequently, customers did not have cash to pay their utility bills. The Utility Clerk reports that there were problems with barely making payroll, but that the situation has eased up somewhat at the end of this quarter. The Nome RUBA did recommend that the Utility Board, Mayor, or City Administrator contact the store and have them remit the credit balances back to the customers so that Utility bills could be brought current. Usually, there are very few customers who are not current in their utility billing payments. The Utility Clerk is very diligent in following up on past due notices and cutoff of services; but, given the Store's practice and the very real shortage of cash, the Utility Board suspended its strict collections policy until the situation was remedied.

Accounting Systems — The Utility Clerk is utilizing the QuickBooks Pro accounting software and continues to learn more about the less frequent transactions. At the beginning of the fiscal year, she set up the Bingo/Gaming Account onto QuickBooks Pro and the Gaming Manager is very pleased with the results. The Utility Clerk had begun converting the General Fund accounts over to QuickBooks Pro, but she has been too busy to complete the conversion. She did reconcile the City's payroll tax computations from the hand generated payroll checks with the payroll reports, however, the system is not being kept up to date by the City Clerk.

The City Clerk continues to be behind with monthly budget reports. The Utility Clerk taught her how to do the reports on an Excel spreadsheet, but the Nome RUBA says she has reservations about the accuracy and completeness of these reports. All Utility reports are done in a timely manner, and the bank accounts are reconciled monthly.

The Nome RUBA and Utility Clerk have discussed the need for the City to have one bookkeeper for all departments. Currently, the City has three bookkeepers: The City Clerk, the Ivory Coop Manager, and the Gaming Manager. The Utility Clerk is a fourth bookkeeper and is the only one to have any kind of aptitude for the work. The concept of one Bookkeeper needs to be discussed with the City Council and Utility Board. The City Administrator and Utility Clerk see the practicality of the suggestion.

Tax Problems — The Utility and City payroll tax deposits and reports are timely and up to date.

Personnel System — The City/Utility still needs to adopt job classifications, pay scale, and revised personnel policies and procedures. The Utility Clerk and a Council Member attended the Personnel Management Workshop conducted by RUBA staff in Nome the week of May 21st. However, it is recommended that the Mayor and City Administrator attend the next Personnel Workshop in Nome that is planned next fiscal year.

Organizational Management —The Utility Ordinances need updating to reflect current rates. All Utility Ordinances need reviewing with the Utility Board and Council for clarification. There are approximately twenty homes on the water/sewer system that do not have utility agreements on file. User agreements need to be updated to include appropriate information and legal considerations.

The City Council is desirous of eliminating the Utility Board, and had requested assistance from the Nome RUBA with this issue. Josie drafted an amending ordinance in December, but the City Council tabled the ordinance due to lack of support from the Utility Board. The Mayor and Administrator have requested that Josie discuss the issue with the Utility Board and Council on her next field trip to the City.

Leadership/Governance — The City Council has requested that there be a work session sometime to read all ordinances, such that there can be a better understanding of the Code. The Utility Board needs to attend such a work session, along with Council Members, the City Clerk, Utility Clerk, and City Administrator.

Operation of Utility — There have been no major problems with the system this past quarter. Any operational problems are handled speedily by both Water Plant Operators.

One Water Plant Operator resigned his quarter, and the newly hired operator is scheduled to attend the next OIT training.

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	

Anticipated Activity

Leroy Seppilu, LGS/RUBA in the Anchorage office, will be moving to the Nome Regional Office September 1, 2001, and will continue to work with the City.

