

Port Alexander Activity Report

Community Overview

Lead RUBA Staff: Gina Shirey-Potts, Juneau Office

2002 Population: 72

Region: Southeast

Local Governments: Second Class City



The City of Port Alexander operates a piped water system. The City Council is the policy making body for the utility.

Water is derived from a dam in the mountains and is stored in a tank. It is treated with chlorine before it's piped to 51 households. A new water filtration system is in place. One home uses a rain catchment system. Homes use individual septic tanks, haul honeybuckets, or use outhouses for sewage disposal. There is no central electrical generation or refuse disposal service. Aluminum is shipped to Sitka for recycling. Funds have been requested to electrify the community. A number of homes in Port Alexander are used only seasonally.

RUBA Activity This Reporting Period

On June 27, 2003, Gina Shirey-Potts spoke with Council Member John Lawson, who is the head of the Water Department. Gina asked if the City would be implementing customer charges for the water utility since State Revenue Sharing has been eliminated with a one-time payout in FY04. Mr. Lawson said he raised that very issue at a council meeting. Only he and the operators are supportive of charging for the water service. For FY04, the operating expenses will be paid with the carryover from FY03 and sales and bed taxes. Gina and Mr. Lawson discussed public relations and building support for the water utility. It sounds like he is doing everything he can to let the council and public know what it costs to run the utility and the importance of setting aside money for emergencies. Since Mr. Lawson was unable to make it to the Financial Utility Management workshop in Ketchikan the week of May 19th, Gina sent him a copy of the student manual and a Ratio 8 manual.

Capacity Indicators

Finances

Essential Indicators

- | Yes | No | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | All revenue and expenses for the utility are listed in the utility budget. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The utility has adopted a balanced realistic budget. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Monthly financial reports are prepared and submitted to the policy making body. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The utility is receiving revenues (user fees or other sources) sufficient to cover operating expenses. |

Sustainable Indicators

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The utility is receiving revenues (user fees or other sources) sufficient to cover operating expenses and Repair & Replacement (R&R) costs. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | YTD revenues are at a level equal to or above those budgeted. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | YTD expenditures are at a level equal to or below those budgeted. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | A monthly manager’s report is prepared. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Budget amendments are completed and adopted as necessary. |

Finances Comments: The City passed its FY04 budget on June 9, 2003. It is considered to be a balanced and realistic budget. Monthly financial reports are prepared by the City Clerk/ Treasurer and submitted to the Council. The monthly financial reports contain year-to-date expenditures, the budget for that line item, and the difference between the two. Although the City doesn’t charge user fees at this time, there is enough revenue coming into the City to cover operating expenses. The City doesn’t set aside money yet for repair and replacement costs, but they are looking into adding this to the budget. Revenues are close to what was expected, and expenditures are close to expected. A monthly manager’s report is prepared and submitted to the Council.

Accounting Systems

Essential Indicators

- | Yes | No | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| NA | <input type="checkbox"/> | The utility has adopted a collection policy and actively follows it. |
| NA | <input type="checkbox"/> | The utility bills customers on a regular basis. |
| NA | <input type="checkbox"/> | An accounts receivable system is in place which track customers and reports past due accounts and amounts. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | An accounts payable system is in place. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The payroll system correctly calculates payroll and keeps records |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | A cash receipt system is in place that records incoming money and what it was for. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The Utility has a cash disbursement system that records how money was spent. |

Sustainable Indicators

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | A chart of accounts is used that identifies categories in a reasonable, usable manner. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Monthly bank reconciliations have been completed for all utility accounts. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The utility has a purchasing system that requires approval prior to purchase, and the approval process compares proposed purchases to budgeted amounts. |

Accounting System Comments: The City currently doesn’t bill customers for water service. When the head of the Water Department brought up the issue of water rates, the council and

the public opposed them. The City does record cash receipts in QuickBooks and now has a cash receipt book so that they can give a receipt to customers. Bank reconciliations are done monthly, and the City has a purchase order system where purchases are compared to the budget.

Tax Problems

Essential Indicators

Yes	No	NA	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		The utility has a system to accurately calculate, track, and report payroll tax liabilities.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		The utility is current on filing tax reports.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		The utility is current on making tax deposits.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	If there are any past tax liabilities, a repayment agreement has been signed and repayments are current.

Tax Problems Comments: The City uses QuickBooks to calculate payroll taxes and makes payroll deposits after every pay period.

Personnel System

Essential Indicators

Yes	No	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The utility has a posted workers compensation insurance policy in effect.

Sustainable Indicators

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The utility has adopted and uses a Personnel Policy, which has been reviewed by an attorney, AML, or DCED for topics and language.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The utility has adequate written job descriptions for all positions.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The utility has adopted and follows a written personnel evaluation process that ties the job description to the evaluation.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The utility has an adequate written hiring process.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The utility has personnel folders on every employee that contain at least: I-9, Job Application and Letter of Acceptance.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The utility has a probationary period for new hires that includes orientation, job-training/oversight, and evaluations.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The utility provides training opportunities to staff as needed and available.

Personnel System Comments: The City renewed their policy through AML/JIA and has a posted notice of workers compensation insurance policy. The City has a personnel policy adopted in ordinance. It is referred to when personnel questions arise. The City Clerk has some previous experience in personnel management and plans to review the ordinance for possible updating. Most positions with the City have a job description although there are a few exceptions. The City follows its personnel evaluation process. The Mayor is the supervisor of most employees and does evaluations when appropriate. The personnel folders have I-9s and job applications but no letter of acceptance. The City Clerk reviewed their ordinances, and the City does have a 6-month probationary period. When possible and feasible, the City provides training opportunities to staff.

Organizational Management

Essential Indicators

Yes	No	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The entity that owns the utility is known and the entity that will operate the utility is set.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy making body is active in policy making of the utility.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy making body enforces utility policy.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The utility has a adequately trained manager.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The utility has a adequately trained bookkeeper.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The utility has a adequately trained operator(s).
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The utility has adopted the necessary ordinances (or rules and regulations) necessary to give it the authority to operate.

Sustainable Indicators

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The utility has adopted an organizational chart that reflects the current structure.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy making body meets as required.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The utility complies with the open meeting act for all meetings.

Organizational Management Comments: The Council is active in making utility policy and discusses establishing rates for the water utility. The Juneau Office updated a rate study to assist the Council with their decision. The Utility Manager is a Council Member in charge of the Water Department. The City has a new City Clerk/ Bookkeeper. The new City Clerk/ Bookkeeper has an accounting background and has taken several classes towards a business degree. The previous City Clerk is now the back-up clerk. The water plant operator is Level I certified in water treatment and OIT certified in water distribution. The Mayor (and back-up operator) is OIT certified in water treatment. The City doesn't have an organizational chart.

Operation of Utility

Essential Indicators

Yes	No	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The utility operator(s) are actively working towards necessary certification.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The utility has a preventative maintenance plan developed for the existing sanitation facilities.

Sustainable Indicators

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The manager receives a monthly O&M report from the utility operator and routinely "spot checks" the facilities to see that the maintenance items are being completed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The utility has a safety manual and holds safety meetings.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Utility facilities have not suffered any major problems/outages due to management issues that are still unresolved.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The utility is operating at the level of service that was proposed.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The operator provides status reports to the manager on a routine basis.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The utility has completed and distributed its <u>Community Confidence Report</u> (CCR).
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The utility is not on the <u>Significant Non-Compliance</u> (SNC) list.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The utility maintains an inventory control list.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The utility maintains a critical spare parts list.

Operation of Utility Comments: The current operator is Level I and OIT certified. The Mayor (and back-up operator) is OIT certified. The utility is in the process of writing a preventative maintenance plan. The Utility Manager doesn't receive a written report from the water plant operator although they are in constant communication. The water plant operator doesn't do any maintenance of the facility. The Mayor is responsible for the maintenance. The Utility Manager visits the water plant on a regular basis to make sure everything is running smoothly. The utility doesn't have a safety manual or hold safety meeting. The utility does have an inventory control list and a critical spare parts list, but neither of these lists is written down. The utility should be moving into their new storage space soon and will make an inventory control list and critical spare parts list a top priority.

RUBA Activities For The Coming Quarter

RUBA staff will continue to provide on-demand technical assistance to Port Alexander and continue to include them in future training workshops.