

## Port Alexander Activity Report

### General Information:

In early July, Gina Atkinson, RUBA staff, spoke to the water plant operator about the water use meter reading for the previous year. He informed her that he had installed meters on the two docks and the scow so that we could estimate annual water use at those facilities.

In early August the Water Plant Operator and the RUBA discussed the meter readings for the community. They were higher for the previous year than we had expected.

During August, RUBA staff revised the Rate Study using the new meter reading and the changes to the annual budget.

In early September, RUBA staff traveled to Port Alexander to review the Water Rate Study with the Council at a public meeting and to provide computer training to the City Staff. During the trip, RUBA staff worked with the Clerks on the computer. The City has purchased a new computer with Office 97 loaded on it. The Clerks requested some training in the Word and Excel programs. We worked for a few hours that afternoon on Word, covering formatting, saving, and other general functions of the program. We also discussed file management within Windows and how to make backup of the files they save on the computer hard drive.

RUBA staff continued to work with the Clerks until the Council meeting began. The Council meeting was a public hearing to discuss the rate study and the upcoming advisory vote on subsidy of the water rates. The meeting was attended by about 15 people from the community. RUBA staff gave a presentation on the history of the rate study and the method used to prepare it. Many questions were asked by the Council members and by the community members present. There was a lot of discussion about whether the City should subsidize water service at the School, docks and the fish-buying scow. There will be questions on the advisory ballot about all three of the services. The consensus seemed to be that the Council should change some of the questions on the draft advisory ballot, including deleting the option that the City would cover 90% of the cost of the water service. The meeting broke up about noon.

The Clerks and RUBA staff returned to the office and worked on a financial report on the Excel program. Both Clerks were able to learn more about the program and were interested in how it could be used to make their jobs easier. Before leaving RUBA staff loaded a copy of a payroll spreadsheet for them and explained how it could be used. They will practice with it until the beginning of the next year and then decide if they will use it to keep the payroll records for next year.

The Council is pursuing an advisory vote on rates to charge for water use. That vote will take place in October. After that the Council will decide what the rates will be and what services the City will subsidize. The City has requested a grant from VSW to purchase the meters. If that grant is awarded they will move forward with installing them and setting up a billing

system. Further RUBA work is pending the outcome of an advisory vote at this year’s municipal election about whether or not to charge for the water service.

**Observations and Recommendations:**

Finances — There are no apparent problems with the finances of this City. They carefully deliberate their proposed budget and approve it before the beginning of the fiscal year. The Council receives financial reports, reviews and comments on them. They are careful in their money management.

Accounting Systems — Although they have a manual accounting system it seems adequate for their current activities. When they start charging customers for water, they will need to set up a billing system and better cash receipts system.

Tax Problems — There are no problems with tax deposits at this time.

Personnel System — The two City Clerks sharing the job do well keeping up with the daily activities of the office. This arrangement seems to be working well both for the City and the staff.

Organizational Management — The organization of this City is a little different from most small villages. Each Council member is “in charge” on one topic or service the City provides. This system seems to work fine for this very small community.

Leadership/Governance — The Council takes an active role in governing the community and tries to ascertain what the community needs/wants before making major changes in policy. The Council is pursuing an advisory vote on installing meters and charging for water use.

Operation of Utility — The actual operation of the facilities seemed to be fine. They have a certified and well-qualified operator for the system. The operator has been working with the Remote Maintenance Worker (RMW) to complete an upgrade project funded through a grant. The City purchased a new computer that is appropriate for their needs. The Clerks are interested in more computer training and learning about billing systems.

**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