

# Shishmaref Activity Report

Josie Morrow, LGS/RUBA, Nome Regional Office

## General Information:

One field trip was made to Shishmaref in late March by Nome RUBA/LGS Josie Morrow. Josie was accompanied by Scott Ruby from the Anchorage office. They installed the two new PC's in the Utility and City Clerk offices and networked the PC's to one another and a printer. Scott installed QuickBooks Pro on the network and initialized a number of software options that came with the PC's. Josie assisted the City Clerk with some personnel actions and reviewed the certification of a petition concerning the local option on alcohol.

Assistance to the City by Josie through phone and fax throughout this quarter can be summarized as follows:

- Assisted the City Clerk with an application to change the local option. Helped her word the petition and provided her with detailed information for the conduct of a special election. Reviewed the requirements with the Mayor and Council.
- Coordinated with various agencies concerning the Corps of Engineers beach nourishment project. Reviewed project agreement drawn up by Corps and Kawerak and advised the City not to sign. Recommended to the Corps that they find another sponsor. Communicated concerns to Council and encouraged the City Clerk to handle the situation directly with the Kawerak engineer.
- Teleconferenced with the City Council and Health Corporation Office of Environmental Health concerning potential water shortage and some ideas to conserve water. Followed up on the situation throughout the quarter.
- Assisted the City to purchase two PC's and printers. Successfully nominated this City for a RUBA Program contract with a consultant for QuickBooks Pro implementation and training this fiscal year.
- Coordinated with City personnel and the RMW for an order of water meters, pump parts, and office equipment and supplies, so that the ANHB grant for Year 2 could be completed.
- Talked the Utility Clerk through some problem solving techniques on her new computer monitor which resulted from a power out. She and Josie were able to fix the monitor.
- Helped the City Clerk with proper filing of corrected Forms 941 for 1997 and 1998.

## Observations and Recommendations:

Finances — The City continues to play Pulltabs only. At the end of this quarter, the Gaming account had reduced the back debt owed to the City by around \$9,000, with balance remaining of \$5,800. The amount due the City is budgeted as being paid in full in FY 00. It was recommended to the City by the Nome RUBA that the Bingo Coordinator's hours be cut back and that all net proceeds be donated to the City, rather than supporting

community activities and medical costs. The City needs to pay off its debts. There are other permittees who can support the community festivals and medical assists.

The Council and employees have become aware that user fees are not adequate to support the utility budgets. The Council is now of a mind to accept a Rate Study as part of the FY2000 work plans. Once some good financial information can be obtained, the Nome RUBA will develop some rates and present them in a training workshop with the Council and staff.

The Utility Clerk is behind on billings this quarter. Three customers are delinquent.

Accounting Systems — Upon RUBA recommendation, the City Clerk is holding the Utility Clerk responsible for the financial reports of all utility departments. The Utility Clerk has been tasked with correcting all the reports she had done from the beginning of the fiscal year, because of material errors. As of the end of this quarter, she has corrected all reports through February. She still needs to balance out her check register for each month, as well as the monthly payroll book.

In answer to the City's need for a good accounting software package and PC's, they purchased two PC's and printers this quarter with ANHB funds. DCED/MRAD RUBA Program entered into a contract with Patti Crofut in Anchorage to implement QuickBooks Pro at the City next quarter and to train the two Clerks. The first on-site visit will be in April, and it is expected that the implementation and training will be completed by June 30<sup>th</sup>.

The utility filing system is a shambles. The City files are also in need of improvement. There needs to be established a centralized record keeping system for both the City and Utility functions with appropriate vendor, customer, and payroll files. Revised ANHB grant work plans have addressed these problems, and the City Clerk ordered office equipment/supplies at the end of this quarter to facilitate this effort.

Tax Problems — The City continues to remain debt free with IRS this quarter. This is the third successful quarter that they have made timely payroll tax deposits.

Personnel System — Personnel policies and procedures need updating as well as job descriptions, classification, and pay scale. Intense personnel training is needed for all the Council members and staff and is a priority for this fiscal year. Delegation of supervisory authority needs to be considered for the City Clerk. There continues to be day to day problems with the employees that could be addressed if the City Clerk had such authority.

Organizational Management — Customer service agreements need to be identified and filed into customer accounts, and those with missing signatures need to be followed up with the customer. Collection policies and procedures need to be reviewed and revised, with necessary changes incorporated into the customer agreements. The Council and staff need training in the current organization and options for improvements that have been presented by Nome RUBA need to be considered. An Organization Chart with lines of authority needs to be agreed upon and communicated to Council, staff, and public. The

City did send the City and Utility Clerks and a Council Member to the Utility Organization Management workshop in Nome in mid November 1999, so it is expected that any work session with the Council in the near future will be more readily accepted.

Leadership/Governance — The Mayor continues to show a willingness in following the City Clerk’s advice on employee actions. Some long-term employee problems were dealt with this quarter. However, the Council needs training this calendar year on Council Powers and Responsibilities. Future work plans include review of the Code of Ordinances and revision where necessary. Council training in budget and finance will begin this next fiscal year.

Operation of Utility — Neither operator has been successful in passing the OIT tests. The RMW is trying for a practical exam for at least one of the operators. Monthly operating reports need to be generated by both the water plant and haul operators for Council meetings. It is reported that the community is short of water because the operators did not fill the tank last Fall. It was recommended that the operators attend the monthly Council meetings to give their reports and answer questions. There needs to be more public awareness of the “dirty” job all the operators have and an appreciation for their continued service to the community. The Remote Maintenance Worker has recently completed a Preventative Maintenance Plan for the Utility and will be presenting it to the Council next quarter.

**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		

