

## Shishmaref Activity Report

### General Information:

One field trip was made to Shishmaref in late October by Nome RUBA/LGS Josie Morrow. Josie assisted the City Clerk with Grant Reports and met with City and IRA staff concerning the Friendship Center. Josie also met with the Utility Clerk to review payroll tax reports, billings, and business office records. Josie met with the City Clerk and VPSO concerning documentation of certain inquiries. Josie also reviewed a petition the City Clerk had received desiring a change in Local Option. They agreed that the petition was not correct; and Josie went through the process with the Clerk, as outlined in the Local Option handbook.

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

- Drafted a letter for the City Council that reaffirmed their decision on an alcohol importation decision. Advised the Council on subsequent action they should pursue.
- Upon request of the Council, reviewed a draft agreement from the Corps of Engineers with MRAD/Anchorage Planner Christy Miller. The agreement is to have the City be the sponsor of a groinfield project. Teleconferences with the Corps and Kawerak, Inc., resulted in a decision to look for another sponsor or to shift the liability for certain portions of the project to Kawerak. The issue is still in the hands of the Corps of Engineers, who are looking at the legality of various options.
- Personnel issues continued with the position of Haul Operator. Josie advised the Clerk to document the personnel files and to coordinate with the Mayor on the permanent appointment of a second operator.
- Council enacted on the recommendation to put in writing a policy concerning City employees playing Pulltabs during breaks.
- Review of Utility financial reports resulted in identification of major errors, as well as omission of some items. Utility Clerk was directed by City Clerk/Treasurer to redo all reports for the fiscal year.
- Teleconferences and email correspondence with the RMW concerning available funds for repairs on the water tank next to City Hall resulted in the decision by Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) to cover those costs.

The City conducted its municipal elections in October and Josie reports they were one of the very few cities in the Nome area that did not have phone queries to her from either the City staff or Community. The Council reorganized shortly after the election was certified, and the Mayor was reelected for another year.

The City sent three participants to the Utility Organization Management workshop in Nome the week of November 15<sup>th</sup>. They were the City Clerk, Utility Clerk, and a Council Member. The City Clerk had the distinction of attaining 100% on the Post Test for the course.

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While at the workshop, the City Clerk completed an application for the University of Alaska Cooperative Extension Service to conduct a study of the traditional water sources at Shishmaref. This study was approved shortly after the end of the quarter and will be done in cooperation with the University and Norton Sound Health Corporation (NSHC) Office of Environmental Services.

Also, while at the workshop, the City Clerk began the 1998 Consumer Confidence Report with Steve Schreiber from the National Rural Water Association. They completed the report in early December.

## **Observations and Recommendations:**

Finances — The City continues to play Pulltabs only. The Gaming account has reduced the back debt owed to the City by \$6,157 this quarter, with balance remaining of \$8,800. The amount due the City is budgeted as being paid in full in FY00. 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 has caught up on all billings. Delinquent accounts have been cleared up, with the exception of three customers.

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 this date, she has not done as instructed, giving priority to billing and payroll reports. This situation will be addressed when the Nome RUBA makes her next field trip to the City, which is scheduled in early February.

The City does need a good accounting software package and PC's. They are using a combination of hand ledgers and automated spreadsheets and timely and detailed information is hard to obtain. Ideally, the City needs a software package that tracks balance sheet accounts as well as current budgets and projects. The Billing system needs to be revised so that the Utility Clerk can pull an aging of accounts more easily. The utility filing system is a shambles. 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 plans to purchase needed computers, printers, software, and office equipment/supplies once she has received grant reimbursements and advances.

**Tax Problems** — The City continues to remain debt free with IRS this quarter. This is the second 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, 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 last quarter, and subsequent appeals to the Council resulted in upholding the Mayor's decision. 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 quarter, once some useful financial information is compiled by the Utility Clerk.

**Operation of Utility** — Neither operator has been successful in passing the Operator In Training (OIT) certification 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 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.

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**Ranking**

1 = Inadequate

4 = Adequate to meet minimum requirements

7 = Exceeds requirements

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