

Shishmaref Activity Report

General Information:

In late July, Nome RUBA/LGS Josie Morrow made a trip to the City to assist the Clerk completing the Alaska Native Health Board (ANHB) Year 1 grant report and the Year 2 cumulative report. In addition, they prepared a revised budget and work plan for the remaining funds from Year 2. Work was begun with office staff to archive older records in the filing cabinets and set up vendor files for FY99 and FY00.

Phone and fax assistance during this quarter can be summarized as follows:

- Allocation of billing office expense among the various utility departments was incorporated into the FY00 financial reports, thereby reflecting the total cost for each utility.
- Coordination with City employees, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) employees, City Council members, and project employees was rough at times throughout the Summer construction season. The City Clerk was encouraged to speak directly to ANTHC personnel about problems as they occurred.
- Advised the alternate Clerk that it was a good time to order year-end payroll reports.
- Personnel problems at the washeteria due to layoffs of alternate attendants were dealt with through the Mayor.
- Election issues began in late September. Research of the City's Code resulted in a determination that City employees are eligible to run for elected office. An application for a petition for changes in the local option was presented to the Clerk, and the process for the subsequent petition, election clearance, and election were discussed with her. She was advised to notify the applicants of the following process also.
- Contact with the design firm for the Flush/Haul system that was completed in 1997 resulted in information that the design engineer had many records on the various sanitation systems and future phases at their Anchorage office. An open invitation to go through the files was extended by the engineer. A result of the discussion was the thought that this winter may be the appropriate time to do some planning, probably an interim type work plan for sanitation needs (a mini 5-year plan).

Observations and Recommendations:

Finances — The City is playing Pulltabs only. The Gaming account has reduced the back debt owed to the City by \$6,904, with a balance remaining of \$13,000 at the end of this quarter. Prior to this quarter, the Gaming account had paid off the back debt to the IRA in the amount of \$9,001. The amount due the City is budgeted as being paid in full in FY 00. Beginning in the month of September, the City is conducting Pulltabs one extra day a month in support of the Police Department. September netted \$1,394 towards the Police Department.

The City still has back debt owing to Division of Energy for a bulk fuel loan of approximately \$50,000 and AML/JIA \$21,000. All other outstanding debt has been paid off.

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.

The new Utility Clerk has billed customers up to date. However, as a consequence of the prior Clerk's not billing customers, past due utility accounts on Honey Bucket Haul are currently in excess of \$2,000.

The former Utility Clerk had ignored requests for delinquent accounts reports. The RUBA work plans encompassed a compilation of all accounts receivable and accounts payable, with an aging, at the beginning of the preparation of the FY 2000 budget in April; but with the turnover of Utility Clerks and absence of the City Clerk due to illness, this compilation did not occur. It will be taken up at a later quarter when the summer renovation projects are completed.

Accounting Systems — The City Clerk is still acting as the primary bookkeeper for the City and Utility. If the City Clerk is absent for any reason, no accounting work is accomplished other than payroll to employees. 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. ANHB Year 2 grant work plans incorporated equipment and training in its revised budget and work plans, with November 30th as an estimated date of completion for purchase and installation of equipment and software. Implementation of the software will have to be addressed after the new year.

Tax Problems — As of the end of this quarter, all amounts due IRS and Department of Labor have been paid in full by the City Clerk with General Fund revenues. The new Utility Clerk is making an effort to deposit payroll taxes with each payroll. This is the first time the City has been debt free with IRS at the end of a quarter.

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 1999. There continues to be a marked improvement in the attitude of both Water Plant Operators. Both have been working closely with the RMW and ANTHC engineer these past four quarters. 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 presented. An Organization Chart with lines of authority needs to be agreed upon and communicated to Council, staff, and public.

Leadership/Governance — The new Mayor has shown a willingness in following the City Clerk’s advice on employee actions. The Council needs training this calendar year on Council Powers and Responsibilities. This training would be most beneficial after the ’99 municipal elections. 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 with careful monitoring of the FY 2000 budget.

Operation of Utility — The Water Plant Operators continue to be interested in passing the OIT tests, and the RMW incorporates math problems and vocabulary in his on-site training sessions with the operators. Neither operator passed the OIT test in August, but the RMW is going to try for a practical exam for them after January. All required water tests and waivers are up to date. 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. The Haul operators need attention this year, and as repairs occur later in the winter, the engineer and RMW will be including these employees in the work program. 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.

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		