

CITY OF UNALASKA
UNALASKA, ALASKA

RESOLUTION 2020-61

A RESOLUTION OF THE UNALASKA CITY COUNCIL IDENTIFYING THE CITY OF UNALASKA'S FEDERAL PRIORITIES

WHEREAS, the Alaska Department of Transportation, US Department of Transportation, and Federal Aviation Administration are responsible for supporting safe and efficient transportation systems and infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, air travel is the only way to reasonably access our island community. Direct, safe, reliable and affordable flights meeting regular and peak season demand is critical; and

WHEREAS, the City of Unalaska calls upon federal delegations and agencies to assist in creating an environment that allows for redundancy in aircraft in order to safely and reliably meet the transportation needs of our island community; and

WHEREAS, the City of Unalaska is the number one fishing port in the United States and host to national and international shipping vessels; and

WHEREAS, the sand bar in the entrance to Unalaska Bay creates an impediment to container vessels entering the bay; and

WHEREAS, removal of this navigational restriction helps accommodate deep draft vessels, benefits commerce, and considers best practices of navigation and safety margins; and

WHEREAS, authorization and funding support is needed in order for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to continue moving forward with the project; and

WHEREAS, Unalaska has several sites that were subject to the Department of Defense's Formerly Utilized Defense Sites environmental program due to contamination which occurred during WWII activities, as well as WWII related contamination that is discovered during construction projects today; and

WHEREAS, the City of Unalaska supports the creation of a federal funding mechanism that would allow reimbursement to land owners who remediate contaminated sites or the identification of an accessible funding source to allow for a timely response to contamination sites that are holding up construction projects and negatively impacting subsistence living; and

WHEREAS, the absence of adjoining electrical systems forces the Utility to cover contingency planning and react to unplanned outages without relying on help from an expansive utility grid; and

WHEREAS, the City of Unalaska continues to support reliable and cost effective alternate energy sources, including geothermal and wind; and

WHEREAS, Unalaska's internet connection speeds thwart business growth, medical services, education, and overall quality of life; and

WHEREAS, the City of Unalaska continues to support programs and activities to bridge this digital divide; and

WHEREAS, as marine transportation increases in our region, the Coast Guard's presence in our community is more valued than ever; and

WHEREAS, the City of Unalaska encourages the Coast Guard to allow for Unalaska to become an accompanied duty station or to stagger the rotation schedule of the Marine Safety Division to help maintain continuity and established synergies needed to best perform in Unalaska; and

WHEREAS, Captains Bay Road is a heavily used commercial corridor vital to the community's economic welfare; and

WHEREAS, this corridor has safety concerns and growth potential which require road improvements, water, sewer and electric utilities.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Unalaska hereby identifies its federal legislative priorities as:

Federal Legislative Priorities
<i>Critical Needs Support</i>
Stabilization of Commercial Flights at Tom Madsen Airport
Unalaska Bay Entrance Channel Dredging Support
Alternative Energy Support
Reliable and High Speed Internet
Environmental Remediation
United States Coast Guard Presence
<i>Capital Project Funding Support</i>
Captains Bay Road and Utility Improvements Project - \$52 Million Total Estimated Cost

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Unalaska hereby identifies its top critical need is the support for the stabilization of commercial flights at Tom Madsen Airport.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Unalaska hereby identifies its top capital project funding priority the Captains Bay Road and Utility Improvement Project.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by a duly constituted quorum of the Unalaska City Council on September 22, 2020.


Vincent M. Tutiakoff, Sr.
Mayor

ATTEST:


Marjie Veeder, CMC
City Clerk



MEMORANDUM TO COUNCIL

To: Mayor and City Council Members
From: Erin Reinders, City Manager
Date: September 22, 2020
Re: Resolution 2020-61 (Federal Priorities)

SUMMARY: City Council identifies legislative priorities on an annual basis, typically in the fall. This memo provides an outline of Council's existing priorities and highlights changes to the updated priorities based on feedback from the lobbyists. Staff recommends approval of resolution 2020-61.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION: Identifying State and Federal priorities is a recurring Council action to express our support for certain initiatives, seek support for capital projects, and in preparation for Lobbying Trips.

On April 9, 2019, City Council approved Resolution 2019-15 identifying the Captains Bay Road and Utility Improvement Project as the City's number one State funding priority.

City Council discussed both State and Federal priorities at the August 27, 2019 work session. Council then approved Resolution 2019-52 identifying Federal priorities on September 10, 2019. After further discussion, Council approved Resolution 2019-51 identifying State priorities on September 24, 2019.

Council approved Resolution 2019-59 on November 12, 2019 amending the previously established State and Federal Priorities to include the stabilization of commercial flights between Dutch Harbor (DUT) and Anchorage (ANC) at the Tom Madsen Airport.

On January 14, 2020, at the Mayor's request, Council reviewed their priority statements and considered necessary adjustments. Council then approved Resolution 2020-10 identifying Federal priorities and Resolution 2020-09 identifying State priorities on February 11, 2020.

Council discussed existing priorities with both the State and Federal Lobbyist at the September 8, 2020 City Council meeting.

BACKGROUND: Taking the time to identify Council's legislative priorities allows for Council members, lobbyists, consultants and City staff to more effectively focus efforts and resources. Current Council legislative priorities are listed below. Council discussed these priorities on September 8, 2020.

STATE PRIORITIES	FEDERAL PRIORITIES
Stabilization of Commercial Flight at Tom Madsen Airport	
Captains Bay Road and Utility Improvements Project - \$52 Million	
Environmental Remediation Support	
Reliable and High Speed Internet Support	

Habitat Restoration for Salmon Stock Improvement Support	Unalaska Bay Entrance Channel Dredging Support
State Ferry System Support	Alternative Energy Support
Community Assistance Program and Shared Fisheries Tax Program Support	United States Coast Guard Presence
Robert Storrs Boat Harbor Improvements \$9.5 Million	Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Revenue Sharing Support

DISCUSSION: Based on feedback from our Federal Lobbyist, the city manager suggests removing **OCS Revenue Sharing Support** as a priority, and has removed it from the Federal Priority list. This has seen little movement for several years and it does not appear this will be moving forward anytime soon. Lobbyists will continue to advocate for the staging area language whenever the issue arises. Again, the City of Unalaska’s planning and zoning policies as well as our Comprehensive Plan now help the community mitigate some of the significant growing pains associated with any future Arctic oil and gas development. For years, the City of Unalaska has been following the Offshore Production and Energizing National Security Alaska Act (“OPENS Act”). “The Conservation of America’s Shoreline Terrain and Aquatic Life Act” or the “COASTAL Act” includes “the significant staging area” language that would qualify Unalaska to receive a portion of the OCS revenue-sharing payments.

Below is an updated priority list based on the discussions at the September 8, 2020 City Council meeting and follow-up discussion with our lobbyists.

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES	
<i>Critical Needs Support</i>	
Stabilization of Commercial Flight at Tom Madsen Airport*	
Unalaska Bay Entrance Channel Dredging	
Alternative Energy	
Reliable and High Speed Internet	
Environmental Remediation	
United States Coast Guard Presence	
<i>Capital Project Funding Support</i>	
Captains Bay Road and Utility Improvements Project - \$52 Million Total Estimated Cost	
*Bold indicates that Priority is also identified as a State Priority	

These legislative priorities are described in more detail below.

Critical Needs

1. **Stabilization of Commercial Flights at Tom Madsen Airport.** This item is City Council’s top critical need.

Air travel is the only way to reasonably access our island community. Direct, safe, reliable, and affordable flights meeting regular and peak seasonal demands of our community is critical. The airport and runway are owned and managed by the Alaska Department of Transportation. Furthermore, the Alaska Department of Transportation, US Department of Transportation, and the Federal Aviation Administration are responsible for supporting safe and efficient transportation systems and infrastructure. The grounding of the Saab 2000 for the DUT-ANC route, in the aftermath of the crash of Flight 3296, highlighted the risk of having only one airline with one commercial aircraft authorized to fly passengers directly between

Anchorage and Unalaska. This was again recognized with Ravn Air declared bankruptcy and stopped all air service in April of 2020. We call upon state and federal delegations and agencies to assist in creating an environment that allows for redundancy in aircraft in order to meet the transportation needs of our island community. We support the efforts of State of Alaska as they update their Airport Master Plan for the Tom Madsen Airport to address runway improvements. We support the Essential Air Service program as a critical tool to ensure the long term viability of air a travel to and from Unalaska.

2. **Unalaska Bay Entrance Channel Dredging.** The City of Unalaska was the non-federal sponsor of the cost-shared feasibility study, led by the Army Corps of Engineers, evaluating the effects of the removal of a navigation restriction that currently severely impacts our ports. The removal of this navigational restriction helps us accommodate deep draft vessels, benefits commerce, and considers best practices of navigation and safety margins. The Army Corps submitted a Chief of Engineers report to the Congress recommending approval of the project. Both the House and Senate versions of the biennial Water Resources Development Act legislation includes authorization for the Army Corps to move forward with the project. Our federal lobbyists believe that the legislation has decent prospects for enactment prior to the end of this year. Once authorized in law, our lobbyists will begin their advocacy for funding the project through the annual appropriations process. We still have a few years before the City Council is required to commit additional resources to pay for the Unalaska share of the design and construction costs.
3. **Alternative Energy.** The absence of adjoining electrical systems forces the City of Unalaska to cover contingency planning and react to unplanned outages without relying on help from an adjoining utility grid. The City continues to look for support with reliable and cost effective alternate energy sources, including geothermal and wind. The City also supports measures that might encourage other alternate energy opportunities to become viable options for our community. Most recently, in August of 2020, the City Council approved entering into a Power Purchase Agreement with OCCP for geothermal power. OCCP will use this to support their efforts in obtaining financing support.

The City is also involved in a wind energy project. The City installed 3 MET towers (Hog Island 60 meter, Veronica Lake in Pyramid Valley 60 meter, and Bunker Hill 10 meter) to monitor wind for 18-24 months. A 4th MET tower was installed at Icy Lake but damage to the tower, sensors, and difficulty with regular maintenance access made it impractical and the tower was removed. Wind monitoring includes speed, force, direction, temperature, pressure, wind shear, turbulence, and icing. There are two primary uses of wind data for wind power development. First is classification of sites. The second is use of wind data for calculation of annual energy production for wind turbines. Both sets of data are combined to determine optimum wind turbine design. Collection of wind data is anticipated to be complete in October 2020 at which time a final report will be published. With the successful collection of data thus far, a draft report has been received from our consultant, V3 Energy. The conclusion of this data collection phase in October 2020 will signal the end of our current project scope and budget authorization.

4. **Reliable and High Speed Internet.** Unalaska's internet connection speeds impede business growth, medical services, post-secondary education, and overall quality of life. Residents are unable to fully utilize cloud-based systems to improve efficiencies and effectiveness in personal, educational, medical, and business processes. Improving internet services remains a long standing priority, and the City supports programs and activities that help to bridge this digital divide.

5. **Environmental Remediation.** Unalaska has several sites that are subject to the Department of Defense's Formerly Utilized Defense Sites environmental program due to contamination, which occurred during WWII activities, as well as WWII related contamination that is discovered during construction projects today. The creation of a federal funding mechanism that would allow reimbursement to land owners who remediate contaminated sites or the identification of an accessible funding source to allow for a timely response to contamination sites that are holding up construction projects and negatively impact subsistence living would be of benefit to the community as a whole. Assistance and support from the state and federal levels is critical to managing these contaminated areas.
6. **U.S. Coast Guard Presence in Unalaska.** Unalaska appreciates the Coast Guard's long time presence in our community. As marine transportation increases in our region, this presence is valued more than ever. We encourage the USCG to allow for Unalaska to become an accompanied duty station. Short of that, USCG might also consider offsetting the rotation of the Marine Safety Detachment so that half the team rotates in summer and half the team rotates in winter. We believe this rotation will maintain continuity and established relationships needed to best perform in Unalaska.

Capital Project Funding Support

1. **\$52 Million for Captains Bay Road and Utility Improvements.** This item is City Council's number one project funding priority. Staff is working to get this project in on the STIP on the state level for potential funding support with a phased approach. We are exploring potential federal funding opportunities as well.

Captains Bay Road serves as a primary transportation route for Westward Seafoods, North Pacific Fuel, Northland Services, Offshore Systems Inc., and several smaller businesses as well as residential homes. The section of road making up this project is a high traffic area of heavy vehicles which are used by the fishing and support industries which are vital to the community's economic welfare. In September 2011 residents and industry representatives discussed the hazards at public meetings about the Road Improvement Master Plan. Although the road's high crown is needed for adequate drainage, it also creates a safety hazard for the large trucks and school buses traveling the road. The public expressed strong support for improvements to Captains Bay Road. The area of Captains Bay Road is also an area of potential growth in the community as identified in the Comprehensive Plan.

This project will construct drainage, utilities, and pavement out Captains Bay Road to the entrance of the Offshore Systems, Inc. (OSI). This will involve approximately 2.5 miles of drainage improvements from Airport Beach Road to OSI, 2.5 miles of road realignment/paving/walkways/lighting from Airport Beach Road to OSI, and 1.3 miles of water/sewer/electric utility extensions from Westward to OSI.

ALTERNATIVES: City Council can add to or delete from this listing of priorities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS: No direct financial impact is associated with this action.

LEGAL: None needed.

PROPOSED MOTION: I recommend approval of Resolution 2020-61.