



# City of Valdez

212 Chenega Ave.  
Valdez, AK 99686

## Meeting Agenda

### City Council

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Thursday, June 18, 2026

9:00 AM

Civic Center Conference Room

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#### Council Strategic Planning Day 1

#### STRATEGIC PLANNING AGENDA

*Transcribed minutes are not taken for Work Sessions. Audio is available upon request.*

1. [Day 1- City Council Strategic Planning 2026](#)



Legislation Text

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**File #:** 26-0260, **Version:** 1

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**ITEM TITLE:**

Day 1- City Council Strategic Planning 2026

**SUBMITTED BY:** Karen Kirk, Synergistic Solutions

**FISCAL NOTES:**

Expenditure Required: n/a

Unencumbered Balance: n/a

Funding Source: n/a

**RECOMMENDATION:**

n/a

**SUMMARY STATEMENT:**

The Valdez City Council will hold the first day of their annual planning session in the Civic Center Conference room on Thursday, June 18<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The session will be facilitated by Karen Kirk of Synergistic Solutions.

**Agenda Overview for both days:**

- I. Introduction: Review agenda, engagement protocol and ice breaker.
- II. Review: Role and Responsibilities of Council Members with City Manager and City Clerk
- III. Updates from City Manager and Assistant City Manager
  - a. Objective- Receive updates on 2025 Action Items, Top 4 Focus Priorities, and Major Projects
- IV. Budget Discussion with Finance Director
  - a. Objectives- Understand operational budget picture, identify 2027 budget parameters and provide framework for future financial plan.
- V. Priorities Discussion
  - a. Review: Tools for goals and priorities discussions and past 3 years' priorities.
  - b. Conduct: Priorities discussion for 2027.

VI. Close out

2025 Planning Session Report is attached for reference. The sessions are noticed as a public meeting and public may attend.



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**City of Valdez, City Council  
Planning Retreat Report  
Dates: June 20 & 21, 2025**

**Participants:**

- Dennis Fleming – Mayor
- James Devens – Council Member
- Olivia Foster – Council Member
- Austin Love – Council Member
- Joseph Lally - Council Member
- Joy Witte – Council Member
  
- Nathan Duval – City Manager
- Sheri Pierce – City Clerk
- Jordan Nelson – Finance Director

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## Introduction Notes

### • Organizational Foundation

- Objective: To revisit why we are here and review how 'what we do' fits into our organizational framework
  - A. Vision – Identifies direction, where we are going
    - *Not identified for City of Valdez*
  - B. Mission – Identifies purpose, why we are here
    - City of Valdez Mission:  
*To cultivate an environment of opportunity, sustained prosperity and well being for all people of Valdez*
  - C. Values – Identifies what we 'stand for'; code of conduct; professional practices
    - *Not identified for City of Valdez*
    - *City Administration Values: Integrity – Celebrate – Innovate – Stewardship*
  - D. Goals/Priorities – Large scale initiatives which:
    - Get us closer to our Vision
    - Supports our Mission
    - Upholds our Values
- Note: Council sets Vision, Mission, Values and Goals
  - E. Objectives – Steps needed to achieve goals
  - F. Action Plans – The plan\* needed to achieve an objective (\*who does what by when)
- Note: City Administration identifies proposed objectives, which are presented to Council for approval / edit – then Administration develops action plans to achieve each objective

### I. Councils Role

- **Objective:** To review what Council's role is and isn't, to ensure discussions stay within scope/parameters of Council authority
- **Process:** City Clerk reviewed Council's role

### II. Financial Outlook

- **Objective:** To review fiscal outlook
- **Process:** Finance Director reviewed fiscal outlook
  - See Finance Director's ppt slide presentation (See email sent 7/16/25; Attachment: VdZA.FinancialOutlook...)

### III. Status Updates

- **Objective:** To review progress on last years (2024) Action Items
- **Process:** City Manager provided status updates on 2024 action items
  - See City Manager handout (See email sent 7/16/25; Attachment: Vdz.BPlanningUpdates... p.2)



#### IV. SWOT Assessment

- **Objective:** To identify where we are now and what's coming up in the future, and use the results to drive relevant goals/priorities
- **Process:**
  - Council members worked in discussion groups to identify: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for /to Valdez
- **Outcomes:**
  - **A. All Raw-Results**

Please note: The number in ( ) = the number of Council Members (out of 6) who identified this item as a high priority

    - **Strengths:**
      - (4) Port & transportation (Highway, Airport, Cruise Ships)
      - (4) High level city services & City Dept's
      - (4) Pipeline terminal
      - (2) World class visitor destination / Natural beauty
      - (1) CSO's
      - (1) Fisheries – sport and commercial
      - (1) Access to general medical care
      - (1) Schools
      - Financial resources
      - Coast Guard city
      - Quality of public utilities
    - **Weaknesses:**
      - (4) Housing and starter homes (cost to build)
      - (4) Childcare (cost to build)
      - (4) Maintenance (Port facilities / Kelsey dock / VCT/ Baler system - need modern facilities & updates)
      - (2) Heavy reliance on oil and gas revenue
      - (1) Transportation challenges (Airline, Thompson Pass, Weather)
      - (1) Demographic shifts and aging workforce
      - (1) Need trades people (PT's, carpenters, electricians, plumbers) and aging workforce within City
      - (1) Access to specialized healthcare
      - Airport
      - Small business development
      - Distance from major hubs
      - Inclement weather / challenging topography



- Opportunities:
  - (3) Great housing opportunities / Affordability
  - (3) Outdoor Recreation / Economy / Tourism opportunities
  - (2) Largest maritime industry in AK
  - (2) Great childcare
  - (2) Great city facilities
  - (2) Thriving small businesses (incentivize opportunities for small businesses)
  - (2) Education and training opportunities through College (Nursing, Construction, Marine resources, Millright)
  - (1) Increase oil in pipeline / growth
  - (1) Affordable renewable energy
  - Dependable, reliable air service
  - Use vast land resources (ie: Trails – motorized and nonmotorized)
  - Increase Coast Guard presence / More military / Navy with aircraft carrier
  - (Public relations) Promote Valdez as a place to live/visit
  - Food security
  - Increase family support
  - Minimize /eliminate poverty
  
- Threats:
  - (4) No increase in Housing
  - (4) Aging infrastructure (Roads, Ports, Terminal)
  - (3) Population / Demographic shift / Retirement – loss of expertise
  - (2) Hospital closure / Medicaid cuts impacting Hospital
  - (2) Federal and state funding / Reduced federal grants
  - (1) Pipeline closure / Decrease oil / Uncertain revenue
  - (1) Changes in state statutes
  - (1) Decline in fisheries
  - School closure / school funding uncertainty
  - Airline uncertainty
  - Natural disaster
  - Technological disaster
  - Poor city services due to reduction in city revenue
  - Tourist trap
  - Decreased value of TAPS
  - Coast Guard closure
  - Climate change



○ **B. Top-Priority Council 2025 SWOT Results**

Please note : The number in ( ) = the number of Council Members (out of 6) who identified this item as a high priority

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (4) Port &amp; Transportation (Highway, Airport, Cruise Ships)</li> <li>• (4) High Level City Services &amp; City Dept's</li> <li>• (4) Pipeline Terminal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (4) Housing / + Starter Homes (Cost to Build)</li> <li>• (4) Childcare (Cost to Build)</li> <li>• (4) Maintenance (Port facilities / Kelsey Dock / VCT/ Baler - needs modern facilities &amp; updates)</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (3) Great Housing Opportunities / Affordability</li> <li>• (3) Outdoor Recreation / Economy / Tourism Opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (4) No increase in Housing</li> <li>• (4) Aging infrastructure (Roads, Ports, Terminal)</li> <li>• (3) Population / Demographic shift / Retirement – loss of expertise</li> </ul>

○ Note: Council members reviewed **previous SWOT**, conducted in **2021**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personnel and Administration</li> <li>• Savings and PFD</li> <li>• Good momentum re: current Council / well positioned for planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning &amp; zoning</li> <li>• Housing opportunities</li> <li>• Historical spending</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government could be more efficient (not get in citizens way)</li> <li>• Savings and PFD</li> <li>• Look for efficiencies in each department</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain current budget</li> <li>• Loss of oil/gas tax revenue</li> <li>• Community expectations</li> </ul>



## V. Goals/ Priorities Discussions

- **Objective:** To identify the best top focus areas / goals to support the City of Valdez mission
- **Process:**
  - Prior to Council discussing goals/ priorities for 2025:
    - Consultant identified tools typically used for goal discussions
    - Council reviewed past-years goals / priorities
    - City Manager provided updates on 2024 goals/priorities
- **A. 3 Tools for Goal Discussions**
  - **Objective:** To identify tools to use when considering/ determining goals
  - 1. Purpose of Goals
    - Goals need to do 1 of 5 things:
      - (1) Maintain the mission
      - (2) Get us closer to the vision
      - (3) Uphold our values
      - (4) Capitalize on strengths and opportunities
      - (5) Address or guard against weaknesses and threats
  - 2. Goal-Qualifiers
    - Qualifiers help filter suggestions for goals, by identifying ones which impact the majority of a population and are an effective use of resources  
COV City Council Goal Qualifiers:
      - (1) # of people impacted
      - (2) Sustainability \$ / \$ to Maintain / Burden on personnel
      - (3) Budget \$ to build
      - (4) Impact to high-need service area
      - (5) Economic impactSupporting:
      - (6) Quality of life / Community enrichment / Attract & maintain workforce / Cultural equitability
      - (7) Conformance with established plans
      - (8) Risks
      - (9) R.O.I.
  - 3. Goal-Identifiers
    - Identifiers ensure a goal is clearly written (to increase accurate implementation)
      - (1) Topic
      - (2) What about that topic needs to be accomplished
      - (3) Action needed (ie: increase, decrease, build, develop, etc.)
      - (4) Measurability (ie: %, \$, # - if possible)
      - (5) Date goal is to be completed / achieved



- **B. Past-Years Priorities**

- **2020**

- *Develop long term, high level, budget strategy by the end of July 2020*
- *Use of PFD for long term financial plan (when craft 2022 budget)*
- *Sewer Force Main*
- *Additional goals (that did not receive majority vote)*
  - *New housing development by 2025*
  - *Create communication plan that improves communication with residents by 2021*
  - *Clear goals for City Manager for 2020 & develop process for prioritization by Dec 2020*

- **2021**

- *Council worked CompPlanValdez and identified top focus priorities out of said Plan*

- **2022**

- *Consultant did not facilitate this year and did not see a 'Goal Setting' section in the report*

- **2023**

- *Housing*
  - *Public, private partnerships; Title 17; State & federal grants and subsidies; (Woodside; Short-term rentals)*
- *Childcare*
- *Legislative coordination*
  - *Better access to information; specify goals; targeted objectives, organized bargaining with communication of similar needs; relationship building and top of mind awareness*
- *Additional goals (that did not receive majority vote)*
  - *Budget*
    - *Long term budget priorities; short-term stay within parameters; fiscal sustainability – how we strategize*
  - *Senior population strategy*
    - *Public education of available programs; staffing; in-home care; make people want to stay; assisted living; hospice*

- **2024**

- *Housing*
  - *Housing availability and affordability; PRICE/Mobile home solution; Open up land; Remove Title 17 and replace with Title 15; College construction program; Add Cottonwood expansion; Medium income housing; Workforce housing; AHFC/ACAH – low income housing by elementary school; Mutual self-help housing*
- *Childcare*
  - *Implement task-force recommendations; Consider creating a commission*
- *Healthcare*
  - *(Council will create subcategories)*
- *Business, economic and workforce development strategies*
  - *Strengthen maritime and outdoor recreation*
  - *Increase visitors*
- *Ongoing secondary focus:*
  - *Legislative coordination*
  - *Budget*



- **C. Updates on 2024 Top-4 Goals/Priorities**

- **Process:** City Manager provided updates on 2024 Top-4 goals/priorities
  - See City Manager handout (See email sent 7/16/25; Attachment: VdzB.PlanningUpdates... p.1)

- **D. Council's Top-4 Goals for 2025**

- **Process:**
  - Council members created a master-list of suggestions for 2025 goals/priorities
  - Goals were prioritized, which resulted in 4 top goals
  - The 4 top goals were fine-tuned using Goal-Identifiers; which resulted in the following Top-4 goals for 2025:
- Note: The number in () = the number of Council members who identified this topic as a high priority
- Note: The text in **blue** indicates high-level objectives re: each goal
- **(4) Housing**
  - *Increase housing stock by Fall 2027, utilizing the housing needs survey*
    - **Availability and affordability**
- **(4\*)Childcare**
  - *Complete an operating, active, licensed childcare facility by Fall 2026*
  - The \* means that 'Childcare' received 2 votes and the goal noted below: "*Address critical housing...inadequate childcare...*" also received 2 votes
    - **Deploy available grant funds to support other childcare initiatives**
- **(4) Maintenance**
  - *Annually appropriate funds toward deferred maintenance on critical infrastructure*
    - **Baler, Dock**
- **(4) Expand: Outdoor Recreation, Tourism, Maritime & Community**
  - *Annually modernize aging infrastructure, while leveraging natural and transportation assets, to expand: Outdoor recreation; Tourism; Maritime & Community*
    - **Maximize current facilities usage**
    - **Outdoor recreation**
      - **Identify key projects in Master-Plan and recommend**
    - **Tourism**
      - **Look at infrastructure for cruise ships / downtown**
    - **Maritime**
      - **Follow developments of mariculture & assess if our assets can be leveraged**
      - **Sea Otter development**
      - **Ports and Harbor Commission recommendations**
    - **Community**
      - **Modernize aging schools (look to School Board for direction)**
- Goals that did not receive majority vote:
  - (2) *Address critical housing shortage & inadequate childcare while supporting demographic sustainability*
  - (1) *Business, economic & workforce development*



## VI. Parking Lot / Action Items

- Housing Committee Meeting
  - Schedule after 7/4/25 & before Report
- VCVB Concerns (Council, City Manager, & City Clerk only)
  - Schedule Executive Session, end of July
- Public Accommodation Tax
  - Schedule after VCVB discussion, at the end of July-Mid August
- 300M PFD Milestone
  - Schedule work session, Sept 2
- Collaborative discussion with PWSC & Council, re: identifying and leveraging interests
  - City Manager contacts College President
    - This summer (2025)
- Develop COV Vision Statement
  - Table for now

### Additional Notes:

- Budget parameters work session
  - Already scheduled for August 5<sup>th</sup>
- PFD work session
  - Already scheduled for September