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Valdez Harbor and Waterfront Master Planning

Preparation of a viable master plan for the waterfront and harbor facilities is well within the means of the Harbor/Port staff and Port Commission. The only outside support for the project would be the use of a civil engineering firm to help develop concept drawings and rough cost estimates. This would likely be less than \$50,000 versus the extreme costs being proposed by outside consultants. This planning effort recognizes construction already authorized at the new harbor; in water facilities, drive down dock, harbor office/support building and bilge water treatment building.

Initial Questions: Development of an overarching master plan for municipal waterfront property and harbors have not been adequately prepared. Our marine assets represent a significant contribution to the economic health of the community. Proper master planning needs to address the needs of residents and maximize the investments being made in these waterfront areas.

There are questions that should be asked initially in the development of a waterfront master plan that speak to future development of port and harbor infrastructure in Valdez. Planning efforts also need to consider long term and deferred maintenance issues that have yet to be resolved.

A few basic questions need to be explored at the beginning of the master planning process. It is important that all ideas are presented and explored without prejudgment. Ideas and proposed projects may work together in ways not originally envisioned.

The Port Commission or a sub-committee of the Commission should be tasked with initially developing answers to these questions. A concerted effort needs to be made to involve key stakeholders in the planning process. To this end, a questionnaire should be sent to every customer of the port and harbors, asking for their thoughts. A well-advertised Port Commission meeting needs to be held soliciting public comments and ideas. Ideally this session would be held in conjunction with the City Council.

Questions concerning development of the port and harbor facilities need to be open ended and encourage development of a wide range of potential options. A successful master plan will consider use of the natural, public and working waterfronts. Suggested questions could be:

1. Name all waterfront, port and harbor user groups. Who should be involved?
2. Considering all the user groups, what waterfront or marine related services need to be developed or improved?
3. What needs to be built to support desired waterfront or marine related services?
4. Which properties should be part of an overall waterfront master plan?

5. As they develop, how should the various waterfront properties work together?

An appendix is included in this outline that lists some of the many projects that have been proposed for the waterfront in the past. This should spark further discussion of potential projects.

Integration and Synthesis: Staff will gather feedback from stakeholders coming out of the initial survey effort. A joint planning group might be formed. An effort will be made to gauge overall support for project ideas and an attempt will be made to group related concepts. One or more alternatives will be developed that best incorporate public comments on waterfront and harbor development efforts. Alternatives may be developed for specific business operations (port, airport, harbor, recreation, etc.) as well. These alternatives will address the optimum scope and sequence of proposed development plans.

Project Development: Each proposed project needs to be vetted. Will the idea benefit the community and add value to the municipal waterfront? Proponents will be asked to help complete a project review form that spells out the project in more detail. Once proposed projects are integrated into one of the planning alternatives, an engineering firm will help develop a concept drawing and rough cost estimate for each unique project. Project proponents will be asked to help identify potential funding sources.

Review and Readjustment: Staff and the Port Commission will review proposed alternatives together, seeking consensus on what best works for the community. A work session with the City Council should be considered once the Port Commission has finished its review of the project alternatives.

Adoption and Action: Staff will compile recommendations made during the public process and develop a final draft of the master plan for the approval of the Port Commission and then the City Council. An important part of the master plan will be an implementation plan. It is essential that construction projects be completed in their correct sequence.

Periodic Review: A master plan should be updated and reevaluated regularly. Checking up on progress every few years allows new thoughts to be incorporated and costs adjusted. This should not be a static document or process.

Suggested Timeline:

January 9, 2016 – Mail questionnaires out to harbor and port customers.

January 9, 2016 – Place advertisements with paper and radio stations for Port Commission (PC) meeting.

January 23, 2016 – Public workshop on initial questions for the master plan.

February 7, 2016 – Work session with PC and City Council exploring initial questions.

March 13, 2016 – Staff and PC sub-committee have planning alternatives, project worksheets, concept drawings and budget prepared for discussion by PC.

April 4, 2016 – Final draft to be presented to the City Council.

Appendix One: Past Proposed or Potential Project Ideas

General:

- Relocation of Alyeska Pipeline Service Company bronze statue from the Valdez Marine Terminal to a waterfront location in the Valdez townsite.
- Seek return of the old ferry dock taken by the US Coast Guard once accommodations are made to better support their operations.
- Consider potential sites for seaplane moorage and operations.
- Certification as a clean harbor.

Old Harbor:

- Update layout and replace floating docks from the lift dock to the launch ramp.
- Construct the proposed third lane at the launch ramp that incorporates use of sheet piling to cut the shore bank back.
- Deepen entrance channel to support larger vessels.
- Development of a “Charter Boat Row”
- Renovate Travelift Dock.

New Harbor or Sea Otter Property:

- Installation of a heavy-duty sheet pile bulkhead dock to support cargo and fuel movement.
 - Heavy-duty hoist.
- Install semi-penetrating wave barrier dock that could support:
 - Operations by a seafood processor
 - Industrial ship maintenance
 - Deployment US Coast Guard cutters
- Subdivision and lease of property to support marine related support businesses (restaurant, chandler, welding, machine shop, refrigeration, electronics, safety equipment, charter boat offices, etc.). This could be at Sea Otter or the new harbor uplands.
- Dry stack boat storage with forklift dock and courtesy mooring.
- Boat launch ramp
- Create additional uplands
- Consider potential uses for Hotel Hill, including value derived from removing it.
- Development of a marine fueling facility.
- Development of a fresh seafood market.
- Install rail based boat launcher.
- Complete construction of the fish cleaning station.
- Bulk ice plant.
- Net loft/gear sheds.
- Lifejacket loaner stations.

Kelsey Dock:

- Water and sewer line improvements.
- There is a \$2.5 million grant that can be used for some projects at the dock that need to be used soon.

Valdez Container Terminal (VCT) and Foreign Trade Zone:

- Improve access to the Richardson Highway by expanding the turning lane and evaluating powerline heights.
- Construct existing platted road from VCT entrance to Richardson Highway.
- Consider construction of a truck staging area.
- Upgrade and replace grain silo transformer.
- Replace existing dock capstan winches.
- Repair fendering on VCT Dock.
- Add an additional mooring dolphin to support military transport vessels.
- Move scale house to a better position or consider widening the road around it to facilitate truck movements.
- Move warehouse and support building to back of laydown yard to improve utilization of space.
- Improve landing craft dock.

Old Town or Loop Road:

- Install all weather boat launch ramp capable of supporting landing craft operations.
- Install a large Marine Travelift. Size should be determined through a user survey.

Recreation and Public Access:

- View area overlooking commercial fishing operations that allows interpretation and public education about the industry.
- Trail/boardwalk that encompasses the entire waterfront from Sea Otter to the new harbor to the existing harbor.
- Continue access improvements from the Kelsey Dock to North Harbor Drive.
- Identify potential public fishing locations.
- Identify kayak storage and launch location.