

# City of Valdez

212 Chenega Ave.  
Valdez, AK 99686



## Meeting Minutes - Final

**Tuesday, April 7, 2020**

**7:00 PM**

**Regular Meeting**

**Council Chambers**

**City Council**

**REGULAR AGENDA - 7:00 PM****I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Pro Tempore Scheidt called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. in City Council Chambers.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

City Council led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag.

**III. ROLL CALL**

Present: 6 - Mayor Pro Tempore Scheidt  
Council Member Ron Ruff (*telephonically*)  
Council Member Christopher Moulton  
Council Member Darren Reese  
Council Member Dennis Fleming (*telephonically*)  
Council Member Alan Sorum (*telephonically*)

Excused: 1 - Mayor Jeremy O'Neil

Also Present: 6 - City Manager Mark Detter  
Assistant City Manager Nathan Duval  
City Clerk Sheri Pierce  
Deputy City Clerk Allie Ferko (*telephonically*)  
Records Manager Shelley McMillen  
City Attorney Jake Staser (*telephonically*)

**IV. PUBLIC BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR**

No members of the public appeared to provide testimony from the floor.

**V. CONSENT AGENDA**

- 1. Approval of Liquor License Renewals: Mountain Sky Hotel and Fraternal Order of Eagles #1971**
- 2. Approval To Go Into Executive Session Re: 1. Pacific Pile and Marine Litigation and 2. Alaska Trappers Association Litigation**

MOTION: Council Member Moulton moved, seconded by Council Member Reese to approve the Consent Agenda.

**VOTE ON THE MOTION:**

Yays: 6 - Council Member Ruff, Council Member Moulton, Council Member Scheidt, Council Member Reese, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Sorum

Excused: 1 - Mayor O'Neil

MOTION CARRIED.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS****1. Approval of Contract with Sherman Technologies, LLC for the Port Security Cameras Project in the Amount of \$315,000.00**

MOTION: Council Member Sorum moved, seconded by Council Member Reese, to approve the Contract with Sherman Technologies, LLC for the Port Security Cameras Project in the amount of \$315,000.

**VOTE ON THE MOTION**

Yays: 6 - Council Member Ruff, Council Member Moulton, Council Member Scheidt, Council Member Reese, Council Member Fleming and Council Member Sorum

Excused: 1 - Mayor O'Neil

MOTION CARRIED.

**2. Discussion Item: COVID-19 Update**

Mr. Detter reviewed the current emphasis of Unified Command, including the focus on seafood processing and commercial fishing personnel arriving within a month.

Mr. Jeremy Talbott, city ports & harbors director, identified those on the new Unified Command Commercial Fisheries Task Force, including members of the medical community, Coast Guard, and fishing community. He discussed how the task force was broken down into four unique sub-groups, to address different issues, including fish processors, commercial fishing captains, harbor operations, and port logistics. He outlined the state's recent request for mitigation plans from the fish processors, but explained the task force would be working on a more in-depth local level plan.

Council Member Moulton requested Mr. Talbott highlight some major changes being discussed. Mr. Talbott explained discussions included the fish processors personnel not leaving their campus and fishing vessels not being in port as often or as long.

Council Member Reese asked if the fish processors had provided when they would be bringing employees into town. Mr. Talbott explained the expected timelines. He stated they understood quarantine requirements for workers arriving in Valdez. He stated the core processor work group was not expected for about a month, if not later.

Council Member Moulton asked if the Fisheries Task Force had considered separate shopping hours for the fleet. Mr. Talbott responded the task force was considering all options.

Mr. Detter stated another current Unified Command emphasis was on medical staffing. The hospital had arranged to bring nurses to town and were arranging housing. He explained the Business & Tourism Task Force was being pulled together as well, to discuss supporting the local business community and economic relief efforts.

Ms. Ferko outlined the Unified Command public information team's efforts, as well as information resources available to the community.

Council Member Moulton asked if conversations similar to the fishing industry were occurring with Alyeska Pipeline Service Company (APSC). Mayor Pro Tem Scheidt explained her conversations with Alyeska in regards to their protocols. Ms. Ferko provided additional information received from Ms. Kate Dugan, APSC Valdez community and public relations manager, regarding the company's policies and procedures. Mr. Detter explained as things continued to change, Alyeska will continue to update their procedures. Mr. Detter requested Ms. Ferko continue her dialogue with representatives from APSC.

Public Health Nurse Terri Lynch provided an update on local and state case counts. She thanked the community for being diligent in mitigation efforts.

Dr. John Cullen, Valdez physician, explained the staff at the hospital had been preparing through trial runs and simulations. He felt the hospital was as prepared as they could be for a small local outbreak. He requested all of the local medical community be more involved in the planning process for incoming cannery workers. He described historic effects the influx of fish processing employees had on the medical community, in particular with respiratory illnesses. He expressed his desire to review the fisheries mitigation plans and agreements himself. Mr. Detter stated input from the medical community would be appreciated during the process.

Dr. Kathy Todd, Valdez physician, asked who from the local medical community was involved in the fishing industry mitigation plans and expressed her desire to be involved in the process. Mr. Detter explained he believed the Valdez DHSS public health nurse and Dr. Samuel Shirk, Providence Valdez Medical Center chief of staff, had reviewed the initial plans. Mr. Detter expressed his desire for the local physicians to coordinate with each other and provide feedback.

Council Member Moulton asked if testing statistics were available. Dr. Cullen stated approximately thirty tests had been processed at this point. He continued to say the medical community was looking to test those with more mild symptoms now that testing was more readily available. He identified the tests took a number of days for results to be sent back from the state lab. Dr. Todd reminded Council the medical community was currently not testing for asymptomatic cases based upon state guidelines.

Mr. Detter reminded the community of current state and local mandates. He clarified the local mandate was still enforceable, regardless of the state mandates in place. He explained how city guidelines affected local businesses. He explained employees needed to follow direction from their employers. He verified economic relief was being addressed at all levels. He suggested a task force be formed.

**3. Discussion Item: Fee Waivers for Various City Services in Response to the COVID-19 Emergency**

Mr. Brian Carlson, city finance director, explained the discussion item was meant as a starting point for Council to provide direction to staff on what options they would like to explore. He outlined a number of relief options, including utility fee waivers and using earnings from the city's permanent fund to provide financial relief for the community. He explained measures such as property tax relief needed to be approached very carefully and involve the legal team.

Mayor Pro Tem Scheidt requested the conversation focus on fee waivers for the current discussion item. Council Member Moulton agreed. Council Member Sorum felt a more in depth discussion should be held. He stated he did not want to limit the conversation to fees.

Mr. Carlson explained the standard process for utility and refuse fees. He outlined options such as waiving interest charges and what would be involved in that process. He shared his comfort as the finance director for the city's ability to absorb the fees associated with such a waiver.

Council Member Sorum shared his support for deferring all utility fees for the quarter. Council Member Moulton agreed and challenged staff to come back before the next regular meeting with ideas for relief. He expressed his desire for expedience. Mr. Carlson stated he could accomplish creation of a resolution for fee waivers quickly. Council then scheduled a special meeting for April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

Mr. Carlson explained other items such waiver of lease fees and harbor billing would require more time to explore. He stated Council would benefit from a more detailed conversation at the next regular meeting. Mr. Talbott agreed his department would also look at options and coordinate with Mr. Carlson. Mayor Pro Tem Scheidt felt a work session on the topic would be beneficial.

Council Member Moulton asked if there was a way to gather information on those affected locally. Mr. Detter explained the upcoming business roundtable lunch. He agreed a quick survey on how local businesses had been impacted would be beneficial.

Council Member Sorum suggested pushing out an additional energy assistance credit using the information staff already had. He expressed his desire to see relief measures taken as quickly as possible. Council scheduled a work session for April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 to discuss relief options in depth.

Council Member Fleming suggested staff look at criteria for a relief check program paid directly to community members. Mr. Detter agreed to look into developing a program and outlined what other cities were considering. Council Member Fleming stressed the importance of addressing displaced employees, as they were most affected by the pandemic.

Council Member Sorum requested a program similar to energy assistance in order to assist those working from home and distance learning with the cost of connectivity. He expressed his desire to review state statutes around property taxes and how Council could offer tax relief. Council Member Ruff agreed an economic relief check program should be modeled off the energy assistance program process.

Council Member Reese shared his enthusiasm for hearing staff's suggestions at the upcoming work sessions. Council Member Moulton felt it was important to take the first steps with assistance and then work forward.

#### **4. Discussion Item: Housing Market Assessment and Gap Analysis**

Mr. Detter outlined his interpretation of the housing market assessment. He explained the demographic information included in the analysis. He stated the 18-30 year old demographic and senior populations have been trending downward due to a lack of housing. He noted mobile homes outnumbered single family dwellings.

Council Member Sorum felt it was important to look at a multitude of venues to increase housing, multifamily housing in particular.

Council Member Reese shared his concern over the savings required to move from a mobile home to a large single family dwelling. He identified the need for a mid-range option on smaller lots, with smaller dwellings which could be purchased at a reasonable rate.

Council Member Moulton shared his frustration with the topic being addressed in the past, but no action taken. He encouraged timelines be put in place and the subject be made a priority. He explained his desire to see how the survey would affect zoning and future proposals.

Mr. Detter explained how the Comprehensive Plan would aid in the development of strategies such as future land use planning and addressing rezoning.

Mayor Pro Tem Scheidt stated there was a need for a strategic approach to housing. She stated she did not feel it was responsible to do something just for the sake of doing something. She believed there was a difference between "low income" housing and "affordable" housing, with affordable housing needed at this

time. She outlined results of the survey, which indicated 74% of those surveyed were already home owners. The results showed single family dwellings were identified as most needed, not multi-family homes or low income housing. She added additional feasibility studies were needed to determine the best housing opportunities in the community.

Council Member Moulton asked if there was still a plan to have a meeting with banks and builders to look into housing feasibility. Mr. Detter agreed those groups would be targeted as part of the Comprehensive Plan. He identified the study had reached out to a number of those groups to gather input.

Council Member Reese asked when the Comprehensive Plan would be brought before Council. Mr. Detter explained Ms. Kate Huber, city planning director, was scheduling kick-off meetings within the next month. He explained staff was looking at March 2021 to bring the final plan to Council.

Council Member Moulton explained the benefit of a timeline or guideline to keep Council up to date. Mayor Pro Tem Scheidt agreed housing had been an ongoing issue for a long time. She stated investing time into finding the best plan was beneficial.

Council Member Ruff asked where the current plan with CORVUS was going. He asked if rezoning would be an appropriate next step. Mr. Detter stated developers would need Council support to lobby for the plan to move forward. He explained it was not intentional for the timeline to play out as it had. He felt because he was not getting a strong consensus from Council to move forward, he would rather delay until the Comprehensive Plan was completed. Council Member Ruff agreed completion of the Comprehensive Plan was an important first step. Mr. Detter explained the benefit of waiting for the completed Comprehensive Plan.

Council Member Fleming felt it was important to pull together details, such as land and zoning, so staff could move forward quickly once the Comprehensive Plan was completed. Mayor Pro Tem Scheidt stated departmental master plans which would feed into the Comprehensive Plan were being developed. She felt a housing plan could follow suit.

Valdez resident Joe Prax shared his frustration in Council's direction to wait for the Comprehensive Plan. He recommended Council step aside and let the market take care of itself. He asked Mayor Pro Tem Scheidt to consider how to allow the public to participate remotely in public meetings.

## **VII. REPORTS**

- 1. Report: Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation Spring 2020 Board Meeting**
- 2. Report: Wildlife Resistant Container Program Outreach Group [Update #2]**

Valdez Police Chief Bart Hinkle provided an update of the program, including advertising and application submission. He verified the rental container option was free. The container purchase option was \$280. He outlined next steps for the outreach team, including mailers and preparation for distribution of containers.

Council Member Reese asked what date the baler would cease collecting refuse in regular garbage cans. Chief Hinkle verified June 1<sup>st</sup> was the current expected date for refuse collection strictly from the new wildlife resistant containers.

Council Member Moulton asked about the process for purchasing a container. Chief Hinkle explained the application process and where to find information on the city webpage.

## **VIII. CITY MANAGER / CITY CLERK / CITY ATTORNEY / MAYOR REPORTS**

### **1. City Manager Report**

### **2. City Clerk Report**

Ms. Pierce informed Council the property tax appeal deadline had passed. The assessor was currently working on settling appeals prior to the Board of Equalization.

She explained the City was moving forward with the Municipal Election on May 5<sup>th</sup> and gave a brief description of the mailer her department had sent to all residents. She anticipated a high return of absentee ballots. Ms. Pierce let Council know she would be meeting with the State of Alaska Division of Elections to discuss how to keep in line with state and federal elections guidelines, while making adjustments for safe in-person voting.

Council Member Reese asked when absentee votes would be counted. Ms. Pierce stated absentee ballots would be counted the day following the election.

Ms. Pierce explained the widespread issue for cities around the country regarding safe public participation during public meetings, to include remote participation options. She explained municipal clerks around the country were actively working towards a solution. She outlined the current options, including comments via email. She stated she would continue to actively look for a better route as requested.

### **3. City Attorney Report**

Mr. Staser outlined projects and provided updates on cases his firm is working on behalf of the City, including COVID related issues and Hilcorp.

### **4. City Mayor Report**

Mayor Pro Tem Scheidt thanked everyone working to keep the community safe, and thanked KVAK for broadcasting the Council meeting.

## **IX. COUNCIL BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR**

Council Member Reese shared his desire to assist those in the community who were affected by the current pandemic. He stated residents should know help was coming.



**X. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

City Council transitioned into executive session at 9:17 p.m.

**XI. RETURN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION**

City Council transitioned out of executive session at 10:17 p.m.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Mayor Pro Tempore Scheidt adjourned the meeting at 10:18 p.m.