

Introduced by: Lee Foley, Acting City Manager
Date: August 5, 2008
Action: Passed
Vote: 6-0

CITY OF BETHEL

Resolution # 08-13

CITY OF BETHEL PRIORITIES FOR THE FY 2010 STATE OF ALASKA LEGISLATIVE FUNDING CYCLE

WHEREAS, the Bethel City Council is a seven-member body elected by resident voters of Bethel to act in the best interest of the community;

WHEREAS, the Council annually sets state legislative priorities and communicates those priorities to the Governor and Alaska State Legislators in its effort to secure funding for important projects;

WHEREAS, the priorities established herein are deemed to be of equal value and vital to the well-being of the community and municipality of Bethel;

1. Bethel Fire Station Repair/Replacement

WHEREAS, the Bethel Fire Department responds to 1,000 calls for assistance a year, of which about 800 are for emergency services and up to 200 are fire-related;

WHEREAS, the Bethel Fire Department responds once a week to a real fire emergency;

WHEREAS, the Bethel Fire Department assists regional villages when requested by supplying trained personnel, equipment, and supplies, e.g., in 2006, Bethel responded to the Hooper Bay fire and was immediately given the command role;

WHEREAS, the Bethel Fire Department relies on the Fire Station as a base of operations for all emergency and non-emergency services it provides;

WHEREAS, the Bethel Fire Station serves as a regional training facility that offers courses in fire suppression, emergency medical services, search and rescue, national incident management system, first aid/CPR, and equipment use;

WHEREAS, the Bethel Fire Department relies on the Fire Station to protect its fire trucks, ambulances, communication equipment, hazardous materials response equipment, life-saving search and rescue equipment, computers, medical supplies, and full-time and volunteer Firefighter/EMTs who occupy the building 24 hours a day;

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WHEREAS, the Bethel Fire Station serves as the Emergency Operations Center for the community of Bethel and contains high-tech communication equipment, laptop computers, planning room, bunk beds, and apartment;

WHEREAS, two engineers, four construction companies, and one certified building inspector have examined the Bethel Fire Station and determined that a new building may be warranted due to rotting beams under the four-bay garage foundation, weakened walls due to moisture intrusion, and rotting roof trusses and sheeting, broken sheetrock, and water-damaged electrical fixtures;

WHEREAS, the Bethel Fire Station needs emergency repairs or to be replaced at an expected cost of \$5,200,000 and this amount should be included in the FY 2009 State of Alaska Capital Budget for the City of Bethel;

2. Regional Law Enforcement Center or Bethel Police Station Repair /Replacement

WHEREAS, the Bethel Police Station is outdated, in poor condition, and in need of major renovation or replacement;

WHEREAS, a regional law enforcement center could serve the 5,650 residents of Bethel and the 26,000 residents living in surrounding Yukon-Kuskokwim villages;

WHEREAS, the Alaska State Troopers and Bethel Police Department would be the primary occupants in a regional law enforcement center;

WHEREAS, a regional law enforcement center would serve as a regional training facility for Village Public Safety Officers, Bethel Police Officers, Community Service Officers, and 911 dispatchers;

WHEREAS, law enforcement agency personnel that share a building will be able to achieve economies of scale in resource utilization, cooperate with each other on criminal investigations, arrests, and prosecutions, and more effectively assist each other during mutual response calls;

WHEREAS, in 2007, the Bethel Police Department received 15,688 calls for service and is currently working 1,262 cases;

WHEREAS, exit interviews completed between October 2004 and March 2005 revealed that the insufficient condition of the police facility was the number one reason why Bethel police officers and dispatchers resigned from their positions, contributing to the Bethel Police Department's high turn over rate;

WHEREAS, the Public Safety and Transportation Commission recognizes that the Bethel Police Station needs a larger evidence room, better building security, greater armory storage capacity, interview and training rooms, holding cells, office space, exercise room with lockers, heated garage bays for vehicles, and evidence gathering area;

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WHEREAS, the City has land ideally suited to construction of a new regional law enforcement center—it is located on a high point outside the flood zone in the center of town;

WHEREAS, the design phase for a new law enforcement center or new Bethel Police Station is expected to cost \$1,500,000 and this amount should be included in the FY 2010 State of Alaska Budget for the City of Bethel;

3. Multi-Use Recreation Center

WHEREAS, the need for a multi-use recreation facility that includes a swimming pool has been expressed by the community of Bethel in numerous community plans since the early 1970s;

WHEREAS, the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region experiences one of the highest drowning rates in Alaska—largely because residents and visitors live near the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers, engage in boating and water play activities, do not know how to swim, do not know how to rescue individuals from the water, and do not know how to resuscitate victims;

WHEREAS, the City of Bethel Multi-Use Recreation Facility Plan, completed by Agnew Beck Consulting in 2005, identifies a swimming pool as the number one facility voted on by community members to include in the recreation center;

WHEREAS, the Recreation Center Committee is a group of 12 concerned citizens formed in November 2007 that meets twice a month to assist in the development of the multi-use recreation center, make recommendations to the City Manager, and assure that the project design, construction, operation, and maintenance costs are affordable;

WHEREAS, the City of Bethel will pay an architect to design the facility by July 31, 2009;

WHEREAS, the City of Bethel passed an ordinance allocating one percent of sales tax collected or approximately \$1,050,000 each year for two years and half percent or approximately \$525,000 each year for eighteen years to support the operation and maintenance of a multi-use recreation center;

WHEREAS, the pool in the Multi-Use Recreation Center would provide the following benefits to any of the YK-Delta's 26,000 residents: allow children and adults to learn how to swim, provide courses to certify lifeguards, provide a place where families and friends come together to recreate and exercise, reduce the onset of diabetes, obesity, and other health problems, and provide special programs for seniors, youth, and people with physical disabilities;

WHEREAS, the initial construction phase for a Multi-Use Recreation Center is expected to cost \$2,000,000 and this amount should be included in the FY 2010 State of Alaska Capital Budget for the City of Bethel;

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4. Energy Improvements and Upgrades

WHEREAS, the City of Bethel owns and uses 20 buildings to provide its services to the public, many of which are 30 years old, were constructed without regard to energy efficiencies, have been severely battered by the weather, and have suffered damage as a result of shifting and sinking due to thawing permafrost;

WHEREAS, Bethel Utilities Corporation stopped providing the City with waste heat in December 2006, causing the City to have to purchase heating oil for three buildings at a 25% premium to its cost for waste heat;

WHEREAS, the City of Bethel needs \$500,000 to make energy improvements to its buildings, including the application of siding, exterior sheathing, insulation, vapor barriers, and sheetrock to reduce its heating costs, and this amount should be included in the FY 2010 State of Alaska Capital Budget for the City of Bethel;

WHEREAS, the City of Bethel's Property Maintenance Division is funded annually and is capable of maintaining the buildings, once the energy improvements are made;

5. Alternative Energy

WHEREAS, Bethel is the largest community in western Alaska and is the economic hub for 26,000 people living in 56 surrounding villages;

WHEREAS, Bethel Utilities Corporation is a privately-held utility in Bethel that provides electricity to residents through the use of 30-year old diesel generators that produce approximately 13 kilowatt hours per gallon of fuel consumed;

WHEREAS, the cost of electricity to Bethel consumers continues to rise as the price of diesel fuel rises;

WHEREAS, the City of Bethel, on behalf of the community, is actively seeking solutions to its high energy costs and recently succeeded in securing \$400,000 from the Alaska Energy Authority to purchase, install, and operate a 100 kW wind turbine;

WHEREAS, Electric Power Systems, a wind energy consulting engineering firm, estimates that the City could purchase and install 1,500 kW worth of wind power without causing harm to the equipment, distribution system, or power-producing generators operated by Bethel Utilities Corporation;

WHEREAS, By the time the FY 2010 State of Alaska capital budget is finalized, the City will have completed a milestone in its effort to be an independent power producer and be in a position to capitalize on its wind energy development experience with a privately held electric utility;

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WHEREAS, the City of Bethel needs \$3,350,667 to purchase and install 600 kW of additional wind turbine capacity to further its role as an independent power producer and this amount should be included in the FY 2010 State of Alaska Capital Budget for the City of Bethel;

6. Dust Control

WHEREAS, the community of Bethel lies 330 miles downriver from the source of the Kuskokwim River and sits on land composed of a thin layer of top soil and tundra vegetation, and thousands of feet of sand, silt, and sandy silt;

WHEREAS, dust emanates from all of Bethel's sixteen miles of roads and road shoulders that are composed of sand and gravel;

WHEREAS, airborne dust is stirred from all of Bethel's seventeen miles of paved roads in Bethel because light sand blows onto the road from the dirt shoulders and surrounding area;

WHEREAS, airborne dust causes, aggravates, and perpetuates severe health problems, including asthma, sinusitis, bronchitis, and can scar the lungs and reduce their capacity to take in and let out air;

WHEREAS, individuals have moved to Bethel only to experience life-threatening respiratory ailments triggered by dust inhalation and had to be "medivaced" to Anchorage and relocated to safer communities;

WHEREAS, the City of Bethel actively manages dust on its dirt roads to the best of its ability by hydroseeding roadsides, applying calcium chloride and sodium chloride to dirt roads, and depositing gravel, but cannot solve the problem on a city-wide basis without financial assistance;

WHEREAS, the City of Bethel needs \$300,000 for the purchase of calcium chloride, sodium chloride, hydroseed, and gravel to continue its efforts to reduce dust in the community of Bethel and this amount should be included in the FY 2010 State of Alaska Capital Budget for the City of Bethel;

7. Community Dividend or Revenue Sharing

WHEREAS, a Community Dividend or Revenue Sharing arrangement is needed to provide financial assistance to all communities in Alaska, especially rural villages that lack a tax base and many of the revenue-generating alternatives found in hub communities;

WHEREAS, the Council supports the efforts of the Alaska Municipal League to instill a Community Dividend or Revenue Sharing program;

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8. Public Employees Retirement System and Teachers Retirement System

WHEREAS, the City of Bethel offers the Public Employees Retirement System as a benefit to its employees and has a vested interest in its sustainability;

WHEREAS, the Council supports the efforts of the Alaska Municipal League to improve the Public Employees Retirement System and the Teachers Retirement System with one or more permanent solutions;

9. Expanding Power Cost Equalization Program

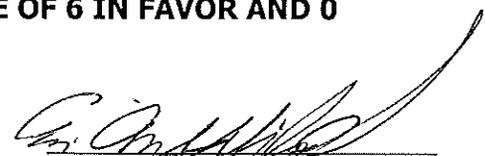
WHEREAS, according to the PCE program guide, "the PCE program was established to assist rural residents at the same time state funds were used to construct major energy projects to assist more urban areas";

WHEREAS, in general, rural areas experience a higher cost of electricity relative to their urban counterparts;

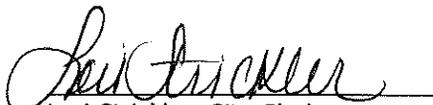
WHEREAS, if PCE were expanded to include businesses which provide goods and services to rural areas, the businesses would have an incentive to pass on energy savings to consumers in the form of lower prices;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Bethel City Council, as elected representatives of the community of Bethel, do hereby establish priorities for the FY 2010 Alaska State Legislative funding cycle and encourage the Governor and Legislature to approve this funding request in its entirety;

ENACTED THIS 18th DAY OF AUGUST 2008 BY A VOTE OF 6 IN FAVOR AND 0 OPPOSED.


Eric Middlebrook, Mayor

ATTEST:


Lori Strickler, City Clerk