

Introduced by: Vice Mayor Maczynski  
Date: March 22, 2016  
Action: Passed  
Vote: 6-0

# CITY OF BETHEL

## Resolution # 16-13

### **SUPPORT FOR SEWAGE LAGOON REHABILITATION PROJECT, BETHEL'S NUMBER ONE COMMUNITY FUNDING PRIORITY**

- 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 City of Bethel provides hauled sewage service to 1,318 buildings and piped sewage service to 424 buildings;
- WHEREAS,** all sewage for the 6,241 residents and 1,000 visitors is deposited into the City's sewage lagoon, which is divided into two cells that occupy 61.7 acres;
- WHEREAS,** the lagoon capacity has diminished to a dangerously low level, because the solids that settle on the bottom of the lagoon have never been removed;
- WHEREAS,** a letter to the City from the Compliance Manager at the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation dated June 27, 2013, summarized the City's lagoon facility problem by saying, "Therefore, the risk to human health of waterborne disease as a result of exposure to partially treated sewage effluent will persist until a replacement wastewater treatment facility can be put into place;"
- WHEREAS,** In 1991, portions of City of Bethel was submerged in raw sewage due to a break in the walls of the lagoon that released 30 million gallons of raw sewage, creating public health emergency conditions in the community;
- WHEREAS,** the fact that a portion of the upper lagoon cell wall broke again in 2005 and caused the discharge of thousands of gallons of effluent onto open tundra underscores the need for lagoon rehabilitation;
- WHEREAS,** the City of Bethel has not received a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) since 2003 and continues to receive only an administrative extension from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation each year to discharge 220 million gallons of effluent into the Kuskokwim River with the understanding that the City is actively pursuing lagoon remediation efforts;

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- WHEREAS,** the sewage lagoon does not function properly at present for the following reasons: the lagoon has never been dredged since it was originally constructed from a tundra pond in 1980, the two baffles that direct the flow of wastewater for increased decomposition are broken, and the structural integrity of the truck dump site is failing and must be replaced;
- Whereas,** State officials at the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation agree that the community of Bethel is best served by the current facultative sewage lagoon technology with possible aeration;
- WHEREAS,** a preliminary engineering report on the sewage lagoon completed in 2009 by Larsen Consulting Group estimated that at least 40,000 cubic yards of sludge must be removed from the lagoon;
- WHEREAS,** prospective funders in support of lagoon rehabilitation agree that the lagoon should be put back together the way it was originally designed and then monitored and tested over the course of a year to see how well it functions;
- WHEREAS,** the City is actively pursuing approximately \$7.7 million in grant/loan funding from the United States Department of Agriculture-Rural Development, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation to cover the costs of lagoon rehabilitation;
- WHEREAS,** the City of Bethel will be expected to provide cash match or accept a loan in the approximate amount of \$1,275,000 to meet the federal funding requirements;
- WHEREAS,** federal funders of the sewage lagoon rehabilitation project verbally acknowledged that they would provide more funding to add a third cell and wetland treatment area if needed as described in the Preliminary Engineering Report completed in 2013 by Larsen Consulting Group, if needed;
- WHEREAS,** current plans for the expansion of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation's clinical space will increase the need for sewage discharge capacity;
- WHEREAS,** the prospect of three new residential subdivisions coming online in Bethel make it imperative that the current lagoon conditions must be corrected in order to accommodate such institutional, commercial and housing developments;
- WHEREAS,** the City of Bethel considers the Sewage Lagoon Rehabilitation project its number one priority for State legislative funding and its number one project required to maintain the health, safety, and welfare of the community;

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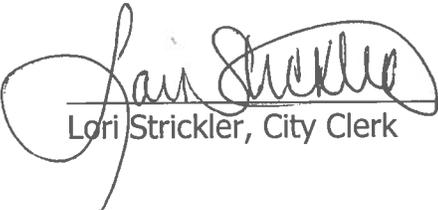
**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Bethel City Council unequivocally supports the Sewage Lagoon Rehabilitation Project and requests that any and all federal, State, and local funding resources be applied judiciously and expeditiously;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** City Council is requesting support for this project from all Village and Tribal governments as well as private and non-profit organizations in its efforts to rehabilitate the sewage lagoon to prevent future human or environmental disasters to the Kuskokwim River, which is the lifeblood of the culture and the subsistence in the Yukon-Kuskokwim region.

**ENACTED THIS 22<sup>nd</sup> DAY OF MARCH 2016 BY A VOTE OF 6 IN FAVOR AND 0 OPPOSED.**

  
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Richard Robb, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
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Lori Strickler, City Clerk