



Seldovia Gazette

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Special July 4, 2005 Insert

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Top Stories

Fire Chief resigns

by *Damara Burnett*

Multiple sides surface amidst allegations of wrong-doing



Three separate letters were submitted to the City Council Wednesday night regarding events that resulted in Seldovia Volunteer Fire Chief Jim Owens' resignation. One letter was from Owens himself in which he outlined the reasons for his departure from the volunteer department.

In his letter, Owens referenced a meeting held in the city offices on June 1st, 2005, regarding a previous incident between Owens and Fire Wise Prevention Coordinator Alix Chartier. According to Owens, Chartier was planning to conduct fire prevention activities within the city limits without consulting the fire department first. Owens apparently did not learn of Chartier's plans until she stopped by the fire hall to claim a box of Fire Wise pamphlets she believed were mistakenly mailed to the department. Owens met with City Manager Kurt Reynertson, Mayor Dick Wyland, and Seldovia Volunteer Fire & EMS Administrator Mary Klinger, to discuss the situation.

Owens stated in his resignation letter, addressed to the City Manager, that "while I believe fire prevention is one of the most important functions of any fire department, I am very disappointed with your decision . . . to allow Ms. Chartier to continue with this program. I find Ms. Chartier's presumption that she can initiate her own fire prevention program within the City of Seldovia, without contacting the Seldovia Fire Department, to be arrogant, rude, and insulting."

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He went on to say that the decision to allow Chartier to continue the program was reached "during a meeting between yourself and representatives from the Seldovia Village Tribe. It seems inappropriate to me that a City of Seldovia Fire Department issue is being resolved in a meeting at SVT without fire department representation."

In her own letter to City Manager Reynertson, Alix Chartier said she tried to explain to Owens during their confrontation that her contract to conduct the Fire Wise prevention program was initiated through Chugachmuit and the BIA and was "quite separate from my job at Seldovia Village Tribe."

She also addressed the accusation that she was conducting "backdoor activity" by not informing Owens of the contract work.

"I tried to explain . . . I was finishing up [Fire Wise Home Assessments] that were not completed last year," Chartier stated. "He was really too angry to hear me."

City Manager Reynertson said in an interview Thursday that he met with Chartier in her role as an independent contractor with Chugachmuit, not as an employee of Seldovia Village Tribe. Although Crystal Collier, CEO of Seldovia Village Tribe, was at the meeting, Reynertson said she was there "only at the bequest of Alix Chartier."

"I told Alix it was improper not to go through the [fire] department," Reynertson said. "She acknowledged her mistake and said she would go through the department in the future."

Reynertson noted that Chartier also said she would share results of the Fire Wise survey with the city. He said Chartier's acknowledgement of her mistake, along with the fact that the contract with Chugachmuit was already in place and Chartier promised to share results of the survey, guided his decision to allow her to continue the work.

In another letter to the City Council regarding the issue, Assistant Fire Chief Steve Lewis encouraged the council to "rectify a rapidly deteriorating situation" between the SVF & EMS and the City of Seldovia.

He stated that Owens' resignation is the second Fire Chief resignation in less than a year. Lewis previously held that post; he resigned when "the council and mayor chose to discard the draft Fire Safety Ordinance that had been prepared at their specific request."

Lewis noted that over ten years ago the paid chief position of the SVF & EMS was eliminated. Since that time the department has been functioning on an all-volunteer basis.

"Now it seems that the agreement between the city and the department, which has served the community well for many years, has changed and that the city administration wishes to assume direct control of fire safety issues," Lewis stated in his letter.

He suggested Owens' resignation was due to the fact that no written policy is in place to guide the relationship between department chiefs and city officials. Lewis asked the council to prepare and publish a statement recognizing the SVF & EMS as the "sole authorized entity" allowed to perform fire safety and emergency medical response within the City of Seldovia - unless another entity received permission from SVF & EMS to perform such activities in advance - and that a sub-committee of the council be appointed to develop an operational agreement between the department

and the city which reflects both parties interests.

City Manager Reynertson feels that Lewis' recommendation to label the SVF & EMS as the "sole entity" able to respond to emergency situations would limit the capacity for other qualified agencies to help.

"You would be putting blinders on," Reynertson said. "Does that mean I can't call on Homer if we had a major fire?"

Reynertson suggested the SVF & EMS be named as the "primary" agency allowed to perform fire safety activities and emergency medical response in the city. He also countered Lewis' suggestion that his actions in the Owens' case "undermined the authority of the Fire Department and adversely affected volunteer enthusiasm," as stated in the Lewis letter.

"The Fire Department, just like Public Works and the Harbor Master, falls under the umbrella of the City and is represented by the City," Reynertson said. "I have never ceded operational control to anyone."

Reynertson mentioned he would welcome a poll of the Fire Department to see if his actions 'adversely affected' volunteer enthusiasm. He noted that in the past few months volunteer numbers have actually been increasing in the department.

Some council members at the meeting questioned the appropriateness of Lewis delving into the subject at a public meeting without first discussing the situation with the City Manager.

"I'd prefer you discuss this with the city manager first," Councilman Mark Massion said, "using the normal chain-of-command."

Following more council discussion, Lewis agreed. "I will take Mr. Massion's advice and speak to Mr. Reynertson about this," he said. "As Assistant Chief, my objective is to see we have a functional relationship between the city and the fire department."

Jim Owens' resignation as Fire Chief of Seldovia Volunteer Fire & EMS is effective as of June 22, 2005. He held the position for five months.

"Jim Owens was an asset to the department," City Manager Reynertson said. "I'm sorry to see him go."

Downloadable documents relating to this article (pdf format):

1. Jim Owens Letter of Resignation - [Page 1](#), [Page 2](#)
2. Alix Chartier Response Letter - [Page 1](#), [Page 2](#)
3. Steve Lewis Letter - [Page 1](#), [Page 2](#)

KPBSD names new SBE principal *by Damara Burnett* *Washington teacher accepts administrative position*

On Sunday, June 12th, Curtis Liberty accepted a Kenai Peninsula Borough School District offer to administrate and teach at Susan B. English School for the 2005-06 school year.

Liberty, who is from Ritzville, Washington, has an Administrative certification from

the state of Washington and a grades 4-12 teaching certification in English, Drama, Speech, History, Language Arts, and Social Studies. He currently holds no Alaska teaching certifications.

According to Tim Peterson, Director of Human Resources for the KPBSD, Liberty taught in Nunapitchuk, Alaska - a small village in the Lower-Yukon Kuskokwim Delta - during the 1999-2000 school year. Curtis Liberty's wife, Ronanda, is also a teacher.

"I assume she will be teaching as well," Peterson said in a phone interview Tuesday.

He could not elaborate further as to what subjects Ronanda Liberty might teach at SBE or what current teaching certifications she holds.

Peterson also stated that he believed the couple were already in-state and should be arriving in Seldovia shortly. Curtis Liberty visited the area in early June and met with KPBSD Board Member, Suni Hilts, and SBE PAC Member, Trinket Gallien.

"I was very impressed by the quality of the teachers," Hilts said. "They are a good fit for Seldovia."

City Council Meeting - June 22 *By Damara Burnett*

Council Introduces 2005 Budget

The council unanimously introduced Ordinance 05-07, which establishes and adopts the amended budget for fiscal year 2005. A special hearing has been set for July 6th to discuss the amended budget. City Treasurer, Ronda Haynes, noted that modifications to the budget - such as transferring money from the Boat Haul-Out Fund to the Harbor Fund - can be made prior to passage of the ordinance.

Downloadable copies of the buget are included below (pdf format):

[General Fund](#) • [Water Utility Fund](#) • [Sewer Utility Fund](#)
[Municipal Dock Fund](#) • [Small Boat Harbor Fund](#) • [Boat Haul Out](#)

Roofing Costs Amended

The council unanimously changed the Multi-Purpose Roof Replacement Contract Order to reflect additional roofing costs incurred during construction. The City Manager noted that the final, total cost of the project should not exceed \$56,900. The additional money needed for the project became evident when concealed conditions – such as dry, rotted plywood and fascia boards – were found beneath the roof. There was also a portion of the roof that was missing proper R38 insulation.

City Expenditure Policy Questioned

Councilman Steve Lewis asked the city to develop a line-item in the budget to reflect monies spent during the year in the name of "economic development." In a letter to the Mayor and City Manager, Lewis questioned whether it is the role of the city to "spend tax dollars promoting private enterprise."

During the meeting, Treasurer Ronda Haynes noted that other city budgets have line-items specifically for economic development. The council determined that the first step in delegating such a line-item would be to define the term "economic

development.” No direct action was taken on the issue, but City Manager Reynertson said he would research various definitions of “economic development” and share his findings at a future council meeting.

Webber Explains Coastal Communities Coalition

Mike Webber gave a report to the council on the Gulf of Alaska Coastal Communities Coalition (GOAC3) Conference he attended in April. The conference addressed management actions that impact subsistence, commercial and charter fisheries, and how small communities can cooperatively solve local fishing issues.

In a conference summary, Webber stated that four GOAC3 communities were represented at the conference and the “common thread in their success was the development of [management] agreements among all parties in the local fisheries.” He believes community fishing quotas could positively affect local fishermen and have a major influence on Seldovia’s economic future.

“We need to have our ‘off-the-road’ voices heard,” Webber said.

Following Webber’s report, Mayor Dick Wyland asked Councilman Keith Gain to co-chair with Webber to decide if developing such a “community” is feasible in Seldovia. Gain accepted the position.

The report by Webber titled “Managing Fisheries – Empowering Communities” is able in pdf format: [Fisheries Report](#)

Additional information can be found at the GOAC3 website at <http://www.goac3.org>.

Annual Moorage Fees Discussed

In his City Manager’s Report, Kurt Reynertson asked the council to consider changing the billing dates for moorage fees in the harbor. Currently, moorage fees are due on the anniversary date of each individual slip. He requested that the fees all be due at a standard time - the month of March - in order to simplify the billing process and allow the Harbormaster to work all available slips in a single timeframe. He also noted that an inequity in fees has been created when some slip owners, whose “anniversary date” falls in the summer quarters, are charged a higher sales tax and therefore a higher moorage fee.

In a separate issue, Reynertson noted that access to the Seldovia Slough via Lake Street has not been closed to public access. He said he gave permission for a homeowner to block the access to vehicular traffic because multiple cars and trucks were parking in the area.

Councilman Steve Lewis mentioned that the city received signs from the state specifically designated for the spot 2-3 years ago. He requested the signs be found and put in place on Lake Street.

McInnes Broaches Bear Issue

Councilman Walter McInnes asked for a council discussion on the recent bear problems in town. He noted that he personally heard of five aggressive bear incidences in the past four days.

“I don’t like the idea of having to protect myself,” McInnes said. “An individual should not have to defend his right to property . . . but if no action or interest is

shown [to alleviate the problem], I will load up my guns.”

City Manager Kurt Reynertson said that “from a city official standpoint, I’d be hesitant to encourage people to shoot bears in the city.”

He noted that shot-gun shells loaded with salt have been purchased by the Police Department to discourage aggressive bears.

“We’re constrained by a set of laws that don’t fit our physical locale,” Councilman Steve Lewis said.

Councilman Keith Gain agreed. He believes it should be city policy to “terminate” a bear that habitually causes problems in town.

The Council took no action on the issue.

Lake Street is NOT a parking lot!



Lake Street access to the slough was constructed in order to provide foot traffic and small boat/kayak launching access to the slough. Over the past 2 months, an increasing number of vehicles have been parking on the ramp and safety concerns were brought to the attention of the City by Rita Brown. The City Manager, Kurt Reynertson, has authorized placement of a removable barrier at the entrance to the street (shown above). If the barrier is moved in order to launch boats, please replace it when you are finished. Thanks go to Rita for the stumps and float string barrier!

DOT Releases Seldovia Airport Master Plan Environmental Assessment - Project 54748

by Mark Mayo, Project Manager, DOT&PF

The Alaska DOT and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) has completed, and the Federal Aviation Administration has approved for public distribution, a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for several near-term (0-5 year) improvements at the Seldovia Airport. The proposed improvements would expand Runway 16-34 Safety Area, construct snow removal equipment building and utilities, pave Runway 16-34, pave

Alpha apron, remove selected airspace penetrations, and reconstruct the primary airport access road.

A copy of the draft EA is available on the web at:

http://dot.alaska.gov/stwdav/Seldovia_Airport_EA.shtml

Please provide your comments by August 1, 2005 to the following address:

Mark Mayo, Project Manager, AK DOT&PF, PO Box 196900

Anchorage, AK 99519-6900 Fax: 907-269-0521

email: mark_mayo@dot.state.ak.us

[Official Public Hearing Announcement - PDF format](#)

A public hearing for the draft EA will be held in Seldovia on July 13 at 7:00pm in the Community Building Multipurpose Room at 260 Seldovia Street. If you have any questions about the project, please contact Mary Mayo at 907-269-0519 or Terri Mitchel of Hattenburg, Dilley & Linnell, at 907-564-2120.

Kenai Area Office Lifts Permit Suspensions

News release by State of Alaska DNR

The Kenai-Kodiak Area Office of Alaska State Forestry has lifted the burning permit suspension for permitted piles. Permittees must follow the terms of the permit and call in each day to the notification phone number listed on the permit prior to lighting a fire. Permits are not valid during windy conditions.

For information on burning permits or to acquire a simple checklist to assess the survivability of your home during a wildfire, call your local fire department or the Alaska Division of Forestry at 907-260-4223 or visit the Forestry web site, www.dnr.state.ak.us/forestry/burn

NOAA Representatives to Visit Seldovia and the Kasitsna Bay Lab

Letter from Gordon Thayer

Dr. Jean Snider, Deputy of the NOAA, National Ocean Service's (NOS) National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) in Silver Spring, Maryland; Dr. David Johnson, Director of the NCCOS Center for Coastal Fisheries and Habitat Research in Beaufort, NC; Adm. (ret) Nick Prahl from NCCOS; and Dr. Gordon Thayer, a contractor with NOAA residing in Homer, will visit Seldovia on July 12th and 13th. NCCOS is responsible for the Kasitsna Bay Laboratory and has been overseeing the redevelopment of the Laboratory that has been going on the past several years. These visitors will talk about the development program progress at the Laboratory, future science directions at the Laboratory, and increasing communications with the communities of Seldovia and Homer. Join us at 7:00 pm in the Seldovia Multipurpose Room on July 12th, 2005.

City Managers Corner

by Kurt Reynertson

The following items were reported at the Seldovia City Council meeting,

Wednesday, June 23, 2005:

- Harbor Parking: in preparation for the 4th of July all cars will require to be moved from the harbor parking lot by Friday July 1st. Cheryl Reynolds (Chamber of Commerce representative) along with Harbor Master Susan Carlough will be putting notices on cars that are parked in these parking lots and telling the owners to please move them.
- Airport EA public hearing scheduled for July 13th. Mark Mayo (DOT) will be presenting the Seldovia Airport draft environmental assessment on July 13th.
- Small Boat Harbor repair workshops: we need to schedule the workshops earlier than discussed at the last council meeting. In discussions with the City Engineers, construction can start approximately 4 to 5 months from the time the city turns over the priorities to the engineers. The 4 to 5 months is for engineering, permitting, and bidding. If we hope to start the renovations this year, as opposed to next fall, we will have to have the workshops in July. I propose to have the first workshop July 7th and to limit the number of workshops to no more than three (3). All workshops should be held in July so we can get the priorities to the City Engineers by the first of August.
- Drawings for the fish cleaning tables have been received and are out to four different shops to bid on. In discussion with the State Procurement office, verbal or written bids are ok. Drawings have been sent to Delta Machining (Delta Junction), Fritz Creek Welding (Homer), ATEC Machining (Kenai), and Glen Welding (Homer). *Updated . . . a fifth and sixth shop has been contacted. General Mechanical Inc. out of Anchorage has been given a set of plans to facilitate a bid as well as Rick Harkness Enterprises from Seldovia.*
- *Add on: Informational item . . . I will be presenting a change in policy for annual moorage fees in the small boat harbor at the next meeting. I want to go to once a year billing (March) as opposed to how it is administered and billed now.*
- *Add on: Jim Owens has resigned from the Fire Chief position for personal reasons.*

Police Report

Note: Keith Baker is Acting Deputy for the Police Department during Chief of Police Andy Anderson's month-long vacation.

This week, Keith Baker noted four instances of individuals in town discarding fish carcasses in their yards in order to attract eagles. He asked residents to refrain from such activity as it is a contributor to the recent bear problems in the city.

People should dispose of fish remains in appropriate containers and keep garbage bins indoors.