

City of North Pole

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Patron Address

*"Where the Spirit of Christmas
Lives Year Round"*

ATTENTION Utility Customers

UTILITY CUSTOMERS WITH CIRCULATION PUMPS it is winter and time to check if your circulation pump is working and switched on for the winter.

Wastewater Treatment Plant Renovation

This past year, the Utility started the first renovations in 30 years at the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). The Utility received funding from the USDA and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) to assess the condition of the WWTP and design needed renovations. The engineers completed their assessment and design in late 2013.

The Utility solicited construction bids in winter 2014 and awarded a construction contract to the low-bidder, Ghemm Company, Inc. for \$2,275,000. The City received a matching grant from ADEC for \$1,783,670 to help finance the project. The Utility provided the balance of the project funding to satisfy the required cash match. The Utility also used an ADEC loan to pay for a new emergency generator needed as part of the WWTP renovation.



New variable speed aerators installed at the treatment plant. The new aerators are more energy efficient and provide more control making the treatment process more efficient.

One of the items in greatest need of renovation at the plant was the sewer lift station that had only one working pump. The pump was 30 years old and replacement parts and pumps are no longer available. In most cases, the

Utility can use gravity to move treated wastewater out of the plant; however, in periods of high flow, the Utility had to use the lift station pump. If the pump failed during a period of high flow, there could have been a wastewater spill—a serious environmental violation.

Other items upgraded as part of the renovation include new boilers, heating controls, aerators, lighting, chemical injection pumps and emergency generator and replacement of rusted pipes.

North Pole City Services 2104

December 2014

Flint Hills Stops Oil Production in North Pole

Flint Hills Resources announced this past spring that it would stop oil refining at its North Pole Refinery. Over its history, at least three companies owned and operated the refinery—Mapco; Mapco merged with Williams Companies in 1998 and in 2004 Flint Hills Resources bought the refinery.

Production stopped at the refinery in June. Flint Hills communicated to the City that it did not plan to decommission or dismantle the refinery in the immediate future. Their plan was to “mothball” the facility so a new owner could reactivate the facility into an oil refinery.

The refinery has been a significant contributor to

the North Pole economy. The refinery has represented approximately 40% of the City’s property tax collections. Over the past 25 years, the refinery also contributed about 25% of the flow to the wastewater system, which translates into about 25% of the Sewer Department revenue.

When Flint Hills announced the refinery would close, the Utility Department made a commitment not to raise utility rates in 2015 to compensate for the loss of sewer revenue. The Utility’s first action was not to fill an open position and now we only have three operator staff. The Utility cut its 2015 Sewer Department budget to reduce costs. Even with cost-cutting, the Utility needs

to transfer funds from Utility reserves to fund its operations.



Mothballed refining units at Flint Hills Refinery

Points of Interest

- Utility rates not to increase in 2015
- Utility budget trimmed responding to loss of revenue from Flint Hills
- Utility reduced its operator staff from four to three to cut expenses
- Flint Hills’ formerly contributed 25% of the flow to the wastewater system

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Record Summer Rainfall

Record summer rainfall slowed Public Works projects this past summer. The official rainfall total for June, July and August totaled 11.64 inches. The average annual rainfall in North Pole is about 11 inches.

Public Works initiated two major projects this past summer—construction of a community fitness trail and a dog park. (See related stories, pages two and three.) The heavy rains frequently flooded the worksites stopping all work. Public Works also

reduced its summer workforce from three to two to be fiscally responsive to the announcement that Flint Hills would be closing the refinery. With the heavy rains and a smaller workforce, Public Works worked up to the first frost constructing the fitness trail and dog park.

Saint Nicholas Sidewalk Completed!

North Pole residents have been waiting for a decade for construction of a sidewalk along Saint Nicholas Boulevard. Three North Pole mayors—Jacobson, Isacson and Ward—worked to make the project become a reality. Heavy summer rains slowed but did not stop the project's progress.

Saint Nicholas Boulevard is a state-owned road and the sidewalk was a state project. Funding for the project paralleled funding for the Richardson Highway-Dawson Road interchange.

The new sidewalk extends from Santa Claus Lane to Dawson Road. The state did not replace the section of the side-

walk between 5th and 8th Avenues because it could not get easement agreements from the property owners.

A major part of the project was replacement of the culvert under Saint Nicholas Drive. The existing culvert was beginning to fail and it was undersized.

The new sidewalk adds a mile of new sidewalk to the City. The City's Public Works Department will be plowing the sidewalk during the winter making it a useable and safe path year-round. With the addition of the new sidewalk, Public Works will now be plowing over 12 miles of sidewalks in the City.



St. Nicholas sidewalk over the Beaver Springs Slough

Dog Park Construction Started

The North Pole Dog Park is almost complete. Public Works installed the fences this past summer. The record summer rains prevented Public Works from completing the park. There are several gaps under the fences that Public Works will fix in Spring 2015 when they can bring in more top soil and complete the landscaping. Public Works also hopes to complete the parking along 3rd Avenue if it has adequate funding.

The dog park is two dog parks in one—a large area open for all dogs and a smaller area just for small dogs shy around larger dogs.

The dog park is two dog parks in one—the large area adjacent to 3rd Avenue will be open for all dogs and the smaller fenced area at the back of the park is for smaller dogs that are not comfortable around large dogs. The dog park will also include waste collection stations to keep the park clean and benches for dog owners. The City will accept cash donations to help add additional amenities to the park.

Sewer Outfall Update

River flow did not return until June to the channel where the Utility discharge treated wastewater. Flow in the channel was variable throughout the summer despite the heavy summer rains.

Despite the problems with the river flow being an act of nature, the City received a Notice of Violation (NOV) from the Alaska Department of Envi-

ronmental Conservation for not being in compliance with the Utility's discharge permit. The NOV starts the formal process requiring the City to resolve the problem with the sewer outfall. Fortunately, the City received a \$500,000 state grant to develop a plan to correct the sewer outfall problem. Possible resolutions include a longer discharge sewer main, dredging the river channel or modifying the wastewater treatment process.



Sewer outfall on Tanana River channel, summer 2014

Community Fitness Trail Installed

It has been three years in development, but Public Works installed the community fitness trail this past summer. The City built the trail largely with private donations and the City contributed the land and labor.

The City named the trail in memory of 1st Sargent Thomas L. Uptgraft Senior. His family was the major donor to the project. Other donors to the project include Julie Ament of North Pole Physical Therapy, Willy and Francie Cork, the Snedden Family Foundation and Kathy and Glenn Weber of Weber, Inc. The Fairbanks North Star Borough also allowed the City to install one of the exercise stations on Borough land.

The fitness trail includes five exercise stations spaced along a two-mile course. The course starts and ends adjacent to City Hall along 2nd Avenue. The trail is self-paced and designed to be used by all age groups.

The only work remaining on the fitness trail is landscaping, installing signage and installing benches at each site. The City plans a formal opening of the trail in spring 2015. If you are an exercise enthusiast, you can use the equipment now, you just have to clear the snow!



Dedication of 1st Sargent Thomas L. Uptgraft Sr. Community Fitness Trail

North Pole Receives over \$1 Million in Legislative Awards

In 2014, the City received five state legislative grants totaling \$1,023,000. The largest grant was \$500,000 to help the City find a solution to the loss of river flow at the wastewater treatment plant's sewer outfall. (See related story, page 2.) The next largest grant was \$300,000 to redesign the City Hall and Police Department complex. The City built the facility in the early 1980. The buildings are beginning to show their age and they are not energy efficient or built to current safety standards. The

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state awarded the City two grants totaling \$151,000 to conduct a comprehensive strategic plan. The goal of strategic planning will be to chart the fu-

ture of the City in the years ahead. The fifth grant was for a loader for the Public Works Department. A major use for the loader will be clearing snow from over 12 miles of sidewalks throughout the City. (See related story, page 2.)

Another Big Year for Construction in North Pole

In 2014, the City saw another busy building season with over \$7.6 in new construction. Like 2013, most of the construction in 2014 was a mixture of institutional, commercial or industrial projects. In 2014 there were five new residential construction projects, but only one of the permits was for a complete new home. The single largest project started in 2014 was renovations at the North Pole High School valued at

\$4.1 million. This is a multi-year project. The next largest project was construction of a new McDonald's valued at over \$2 million. In 2013 the City saw almost \$12 million in construction, the single largest project started that year was the North Pole Library valued at \$7.3 million.



Construction of new McDonald's