



ASSEMBLY BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

MEG ZALETEL | CO-CHAIR
ANNA BRAWLEY | CO-CHAIR

July 12, 2024
sent via email

Dear Mr. Falsey,

Welcome back to the Municipality and congratulations on your new position. We look forward to working with you on a variety of administrative and finance matters.

One of the more time-sensitive issues we would like to address with you is the process for developing the Capital Improvement Plan and Budget and how these feed into the annual Legislative Program and bond packages. We have worked with the previous administration on this issue over the past year and have made great strides (an overview of our process improvements is attached and the next step is an Assembly Worksession on Aug. 16). Our goal is to make the process more transparent to the public and to standardize the chain of events from the idea stage to CIP to CIB to bond packages and the Legislative Program, so that we have fewer last-minute scrambles to add or remove items.

One of the remaining sticking points is the annual Community Council Survey on capital needs. As we meet with our community councils and communicate with constituents, we continue to hear frustration and confusion with the process. The current timeline where they submit their responses in the summer after the Municipality has already begun to develop the priority lists is one of the leading problems.

We were working with the previous Administration towards a fall Community Council Survey on capital needs and hope that you will continue this work and launch the 2026 survey this fall, with notice going out to councils as they reconvene in September and responses due by the end of the year. This way, the Municipality will have the data in hand as they enter the new year and begin to sort out projects for the following year's budget cycle.

We understand that you will be very busy with the transition and crafting the 2025 budget, so this is our primary ask for this year. However, we are also hoping to develop some other improvements to the survey for future years:

- Publicize the survey questions in a document on the survey page so participants can see the questions in advance. Right now, it is hard to save the survey before submitting and many respondents have lost data because they did not save properly. If they could see the questions and prepare in advance, they could complete the survey in one sitting and not worry about losing data.



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- Provide the ability for Councils to differentiate council-wide priorities vs. areawide priorities. Ms. Lechner worked with IT to make this change for the 2024 survey, but in looking at this year's survey results, it does not appear that the change was made.
- Allow an option for community members who are not involved in their council to provide suggestions and vote on priorities – perhaps switch to a public survey and allow councils to respond to the survey on behalf of their council.
- Community Councils would like to be able to suggest projects for removal and then see those projects actually removed from future project lists (this may take Assembly action to remove from CIP and CIB, but the Assembly needs more direction from the Administration on how to remove projects not supported by their councils).
- Limit or allow more categorization of projects, including differentiation of small and high dollar projects. Right now, some councils have over 20 priorities, which makes it harder to narrow down true priorities. We've heard that past surveys had categories for roads, parks, drainage, buildings, etc. but that those categories made the survey too unwieldy to track. We'd like to explore some middle ground where there are a few more ways to cross-reference the data, while also keeping the data to a manageable size.

We thank you for your time and look forward to discussing this more with your team. Our Legislative Services Director Clare Ross has been working with Kent Kohlhase, Lance Wilber, Melinda Kolhaas and Chelsea Ward-Waller on this project and we offer her as a resource to continue working on this project and to serve as a bridge between the Assembly's wishes and MOA staff capacity. Ms. Ross is also happy to assist with communications to the Federation of Community Councils and to individual councils through Assembly Members to reduce the burden on your team for implementing a new system.

Sincerely,

Assembly Vice Chair Meg Zaletel
Budget and Finance Committee Co-Chair
District 4, Midtown

Assembly Member Anna Brawley
Budget and Finance Committee Co-Chair
District 3, West Anchorage

CC Arianna Bellizzi, Executive Director, Federation of Community Councils