

September 30, 2025



Mark Your Calendar

Municipal Election: Vote October 7

The regular Municipal Election for the City and Borough of Sitka is just around the corner on Tuesday, October 7, 2025.

Sitkans will have plenty of ways to make their voices heard:

- Absentee by Mail – Applications close September 30. If you've applied, ballots must be postmarked by Election Day and received by October 10.
- Absentee by Fax/Electronic – Apply by 5:00 p.m. on Election Day, October 7. Ballots must be submitted by 8:00 p.m. that night.
- Absentee by Personal Representative – Available September 22, voters unable to visit the polls can appoint someone to pick up a ballot on their behalf.
- Early In-Person Voting – Available September 22 through October 6 at Harrigan Centennial Hall (weekdays 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. and Saturdays September 27 & October 4 from 9:00 a.m.–noon).
- Election Day In-Person Voting – Polls will be open 7:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m. at Harrigan Centennial Hall.

For candidate information, a sample ballot, absentee ballot request forms, and more, visit cityofsitka.com/RegularMunicipalElection or contact the Municipal Clerk's Office at 907.747.1826 or 907.747.1811.

Seasonal Sales Tax Rate Change

CBS reminds residents and businesses that the seasonal sales tax rate will decrease to 5% effective October 1. The bed tax for rentals of less than 30 days will remain at 6% year-round.

New Utility Payment System Now Available

CBS has launched a new utility payment system with enhanced security and more features. Customers can now pay bills online, set up autopay, go paperless, and track usage [HERE](#).

Reminder: Customers previously enrolled in autopay must re-enroll. Payments now draft on the bill's due date. With a number of disconnect letters recently issued, please double-check your account to ensure re-enrollment.

Other options: Pay by phone at 907-312-2934, by cash or check (unchanged), or at public computers available at the Sitka Public Library. The Library can also assist in setting up the account.

Projects in Motion

Investing in Sitka's Future

On September 23, the Assembly approved transferring \$3.2 million into CBS's Public Infrastructure Sinking Fund, one of the largest contributions CBS has ever made. These funds come from department-level savings and will be available for capital projects in the future.

Priority projects include the marine haulout and boatyard, airport terminal improvements, seawall, seaplane base, and major wastewater upgrades.

This investment directly supports Strategic Plan goal 4: Plan and invest in sustainable infrastructure for future generations, ensuring CBS continues to reinvest in itself.

Sitka Seaplane Base Project Update

The Sitka Seaplane Base project is moving into a key stage with the release of the Environmental Assessment — an important step to advance the project from 65% to 100% design and prepare for construction. The assessment will be completed by the end of this year, with permitting continuing through 2026. Final design is expected in 2026, with construction anticipated to begin in 2027–2028.



On September 16, a Pilot Stakeholder Meeting was held. The next opportunity for community engagement will be the FAA Public Open House on Thursday, October 9, at 5:00 p.m. at Harrigan Centennial Hall. This open house will provide the public with information on the Environmental Assessment and a chance to share comments.

To stay updated, including access to the draft Environmental Assessment and a comprehensive list of completed studies and agreements, visit the project website: [HERE](#).



Sitka Airport: Moving Into the Next Phase

With the Escalator Ribbon Cutting and Terminal Addition Open House now behind us, Sitka's airport is ready to take off into its Phase 2 of improvements with more upgrades on the horizon including the baggage claim area.

We know this next stage will bring some temporary inconveniences as construction moves into the existing building — from lighting changes to tighter spaces and temporary partitions.

Thank you for your patience as we work through this transition. The end result will be a modern, more efficient airport terminal that meets the needs of Sitkans and visitors for years to come.

A New Chapter for Sitka's Fleet

On September 18, 2025, community leaders, partners, and stakeholders gathered at the Gary Paxton Industrial Park to cut the ribbon on Sitka's new Marine Haulout, a long-anticipated project to keep our working waterfront strong.

On September 23, despite weather delays, the first vessel was hauled out and onto the washdown area, with another waiting to be hauled out next, officially marking the facility's opening for business.

What began as a challenge when Sitka lost its former haul out has become a major investment in the future of our community. Thanks to the support of the **Assembly, Sitka voters**, the dedication of **City staff** and the **GPIP Board**, and the partnerships of the **Denali Commission, SEDA, Western Marine, K&E, Sitka Electric, Hard Rock Construction, Hanson Maritime, Highmark Marine**, and **PND Engineers**, vessels can now stay local for repairs — keeping our fleet, tradespeople, and economy rooted right here at home.

This milestone strengthens Sitka's working waterfront and advances our long-term infrastructure priorities.

To schedule a haul out, contact Highmark Marine directly at 907-217-2850 or sitka@highmarkmarine.com. Their website is: highmarkmarine.com/sitka-shipyard



Community Connections

2025-2026 Strategic Plan Community Survey

The City and Borough of Sitka is moving into year four of its Strategic Plan, and we want to hear from you! The plan is our community's shared roadmap, guiding decisions and priorities to make Sitka an even better place to live, work, and visit.

By taking a few minutes to complete the 2025–2026 Community Survey, you'll help identify what's working well, where we can improve, and what matters most to Sitkans right now. Your feedback will directly inform this year's Strategic Plan update and keep CBS focused on the opportunities and challenges that matter to our community.

You can review the current plan here: cityofsitka.com/news/post/16137

Take the survey here: surveymonkey.com/r/P2JHMCH

Thank you for sharing your voice and ideas. Together, we can build a stronger future for Sitka!



End-of-Season Tourism Survey

CBS invites Sitkans to share their thoughts on the 2025 tourism season through the End-of-Season Community Survey. The survey will be posted on the CBS website by Monday, October 6 and remain open through Sunday, October 26.

Your feedback will help guide future planning, from street closures and temporary restrooms to traffic management and tourism best practices for the 2026 season. Results will be presented to the Tourism Commission at its regular meeting on November 13. For questions contact planning@cityofsitka.org.

City League Basketball Registration Open

Get ready, Sitka! Registration is now open for the 2025 City League Basketball season. Games tip off on Monday, October 6 at the Blatchley Middle School Gym.

This season will feature four divisions: Women's, Recreational, Competitive, Masters (45+).

Players can register and pay the \$80 player fee [online](#). Team sponsors can also find forms online; sponsorships are \$500 per team. All registration and payments must be submitted prior to play.

For more information, contact Sitka Parks and Recreation at recreation@cityofsitka.org or 907.747.4031.



**Hands-on Class Visit
Monthly Drawings
Win Prizes**

**2025 Power Pledge
Challenge**

Bring energy efficiency and conservation into your classroom with hands-on lessons, presentations from industry professionals, and other place-based energy activities for students in grades 4-12.

Learn more and sign up at <https://akenergysmart.org/power-pledge-challenge/>

Open to all 4-12 grade classrooms served by one of many sponsoring utility or regional partner



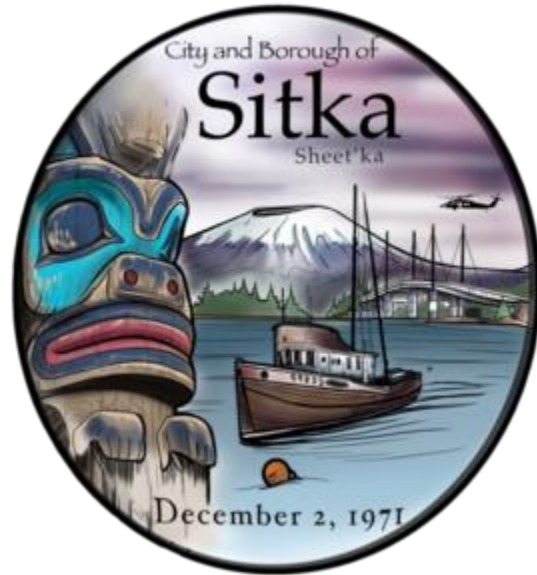
Celebrating Sitka's Seal

Marking 5 Years of Sitka's New Seal

On November 10, 2020, the Sitka Assembly officially approved the redesigned city seal following a public design contest earlier that year.

The winning design submitted by artist **Aaron Traz Hill**, has since become a familiar emblem across our community, appearing on official documents, vehicles, signage, and more.

Five years later, the seal stands as a reminder of the creativity and community spirit that continue to shape Sitka's identity.



Behind the Design: A Conversation with Aaron Traz Hill

To mark the 5th anniversary of Sitka's city seal, we caught up with designer Aaron Traz Hill to reflect on his inspiration, the experience of winning the contest, and what the seal means to him today.

On inspiration: Aaron shared that his design was shaped by conversations with Sitkans, who spoke about the symbols that best captured the community's identity. "Tlingit culture is rooted in Sitka, and people talked about how important it was to include that. Others mentioned the O'Connell Bridge and fishing, though narrowing down what to show about fishing was the hardest part, since it's really where Sitka comes from. Sitka is such a melting pot of people, it was difficult to capture everything that represents this place."

On learning his design had won: "When I found out, it honestly took a week to sink in," Aaron said. "It didn't really feel real until I came back to Sitka and saw it on City trucks and signs. That's when the weight of it hit me. It's wild, and such a privilege, to feel like I left my mark on Sitka, because Sitka has left its mark on me."

On what it means five years later: Living next to a City substation gave Aaron daily reminders of the seal's presence. "Every day I'd see it on a City truck, and I'd have these moments of realization - it might actually outlast me, and that's a cool thought," he reflected. Family connections have also deepened the experience. "My

grandparents visited and sent me pictures of the seal. Being able to share that with my family and friends has been really special."

On the design process and community ties: Aaron explained that several elements of the seal carry personal meaning. Mt. Edgecumbe, totem poles, and fishing boats were inspired by his own memories - fishing in front of Totem Park, walking past the totem poles, and time spent on the water. His siblings have all been part of the fishing sector. The O'Connell Bridge is a part of Sitka's identity and a recognizable landmark. The Coast Guard helicopter holds particular weight: his brother was in a boating accident ten years ago, and Aaron credits the Coast Guard with saving his life. "I even got to meet the man who picked him up," he recalled.

Most of all, Aaron emphasized his gratitude. "Sitka has always embraced the arts and created opportunities for people to explore their creativity, from programs like Fine Arts Camp to the community's support for local artists. Designing the seal was my way of giving something back to the place that gave me so much."



Sitka Public Library by the Numbers

From July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025, the Sitka Public Library continued to be a hub of learning, connection, and community. Here's a snapshot of what your library made possible this past year.

- 87,688 visitors came through the doors
- 27,456 reference questions answered
- 72,850 books checked out
- Nearly 12,500 digital downloads including audiobooks, eBooks, and magazines
- 53,228 public WiFi sessions and 3,555 computer sessions
- 1,177 meeting/study room reservations

These numbers highlight the vital role the library plays in Sitka — providing resources, technology, and spaces that bring people together.

City Administrator's Corner

Preparing Sitka for Storm Season

As Sitka heads into fall, City staff are focused on readiness. From clearing culverts, and maintaining emergency equipment, to the quick response of Fire, Electric, and Public Works. Crews are working hard to keep the community safe.

Readiness means looking ahead, coordinating across departments, and making sure that when storms or emergencies come, we aren't reacting at the last minute.

But I'd also like to remind Sitkans that the most effective preparation happens at the household level. From making a plan to checking in on neighbors, especially elders and those with health or mobility concerns, it starts with you.

Want to hear more? Tune in on Thursday, October 2, at 8:16 a.m. for my next morning interview as part of my monthly conversations on hot topics in Sitka. <https://www.kcaw.org>.



Planning for Sitka's Future Through Asset Management

As CBS moves into the third update its Strategic Plan, one key focus is making smart, long-term investments in Sitka's infrastructure. Asset management plays a central role in that process.

CBS uses a risk-based performance framework to guide decisions, balancing three factors: budget, level of service, and risk. This means projects are prioritized based on where they can reduce the greatest risks, whether it's repairing a roof, fixing a

water main, or paving a road. Investing in maintenance today helps avoid higher costs and service disruptions tomorrow.

Funds are carefully allocated so that utility revenues go back into the same services, water, wastewater, and electricity, ensuring resources are aligned with community priorities. This approach helps CBS make smarter, long-term investments in infrastructure and services.

As we prepare for the fall Strategic Plan update, Sitkans have the chance to share [feedback](#) and help guide how resources are directed. These decisions shape the services we all rely on every day, and your voice matters in setting the course for Sitka's future.

Tune into KCAW with John Leach each month!

City Administrator, John Leach, has been taking on hot topics in Sitka, live on KCAW radio. Tune in on Thursday, October 2, at 8:16 a.m. to keep up with his next updates! <https://www.kcaw.org>.

