

Bill Hogan
Commissioner
P.O. Box 110601
Juneau, AK 99811-0601
www.hss.state.ak.us



Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Sept. 17, 2010

Contact: Sarana Schell, (907) 269-8041, cell (907) 240-7462, sarana.schell@alaska.gov

Totem Square safety upgrades to begin in coming weeks

Baranov Totem Pole will be displayed at nearby historical house during construction

SITKA— The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) awarded a \$307,910 contract for Totem Square improvements to CBC Construction of Sitka earlier this week. Work is scheduled to begin in late September or early October, and is due to be completed before next summer's tourist season.

The project will bring the square up to safety codes and improve access for people with disabilities. The contract is to upgrade a fence along the existing seawall, improve drainage and add two sidewalks, new curbs, landscaping and lighting.

The contractor will take down the unstable Baranov Totem Pole as part of the safety upgrade, and in order to complete other work. The Sitka Tribe of Alaska is planning a removal ceremony.

During construction, the totem pole will be displayed at the Geodetic House, 210 Seward St. A wood conservator will do a condition assessment on the pole while it is horizontal.

The square is jointly listed with the neighboring Sitka Pioneer Home on the National Register of Historic Places, so all plans have been approved by the State Historical Preservation Office, Department of Natural Resources. DHSS issued the contract as part of its responsibilities for the maintenance and upkeep of Totem Square as well as the Pioneer Home.

The DHSS Division of Finance and Management Services, Facilities Section made the contract award and will manage the project. Facilities manager Jennifer Klein will oversee the project; she can be reached at (907) 465-1872 or jennifer.klein@alaska.gov.

For details, visit <http://hss.state.ak.us/dalp/sitka/totem.htm>. More information will be posted as it becomes available, including a time and date for the totem removal ceremony.

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