

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH SPECIAL MEETING
ASSEMBLY APRIL 5, 2001

I. CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on April 5, 2001, at the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly Chambers, Palmer, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Mayor Timothy L. Anderson. The purpose of the special meeting was to select a redistricting proposal.

II. ROLL CALL

Assembly members present and establishing a quorum were:

Mr. Larry DeVilbiss, Assembly District No. 1
Ms. Sara Jansen, Assembly District No. 2 (Deputy Mayor) (via teleconference)
Mr. Talis J. Colberg, Assembly District No. 3
Mr. Dan Kelly, Assembly District No. 4
Ms. Jody Simpson, Assembly District No. 5
Mr. Jim Colver, Assembly District No. 6 (via teleconference at 7:15 p.m.)

Assembly members absent and excused were:

Ms. Kelly Lankford Ladere, Assembly District No. 7

Staff participating were:

Mr. John Duffy, Borough Manager
Mr. Michael Gatti, Borough Attorney
Ms. Elizabeth Manfred, Deputy Borough Clerk
Ms. Michelle M. McGehee, Borough Clerk's Secretary
Ms. Sandy Garley, Planning Director
Mr. Pete Miller, GIS Coordinator
Ms. Lindsey Finney, Planning Technician

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was led by Mr. Stan Tucker, a former assembly member.

IV. NEW BUSINESS – PUBLIC HEARING

a. AM No. 01-036: Selecting Redistricting Proposals

Ms. Sandra Garley gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding the request from the state to present a preliminary redistricting map with the borough's proposal and explained the four scenarios that have been mapped for assembly discussion purposes.

Ms. Garley:

- classified that the mapping criteria used when preparing the four maps included: proportionally populated districts; historic and projected growth of areas within the borough; the preservation of incorporated community boundaries; the preservation of communities with common interests; the use of natural geographic features and major transportation links where ever possible for district boundaries; incumbents remaining within district boundaries; and the creation of reasonably compact districts.
- referenced a slide that shows the existing legislative districts and noted that they are compact; and
- spoke to the recommendation to remain within 5 percent of the ideal population targeted at approximately 15, 673.

Mr. Miller:

- commented that the borough is using modern technology to help keep track of where we are in the redistricting process;

- stated that census blocks are used for measurement purposes;
- spoke to the geographic information system used to develop the redistricting maps;
- explained that redistricting is the process of regathering the census blocks in a sequence that provides a fair representation of the population;
- noted that the U.S. census bureau is responsible for maintaining a fair and accurate count of people, and the borough is bound by the Constitution to use the numbers they have compiled;
- explained that the process of mapping entailed using the aforementioned criteria to group census blocks together and to assign them to districts, bearing in mind the targeted population; and
- remarked that there is an advantage to using new technology in order to develop the scenarios.

Mr. Duffy:

- reported that data was received on March 20, 2001;
- conveyed that three days were needed to convert the data into a usable format;
- noted that another three days were necessary to draft the four redistricting proposals; and
- concluded that the borough had limited time to work on the proposals.

Assemblymember DeVilbiss inquired if the Redistricting Board has seen any of the borough proposals as of this time.

Mr. Duffy clarified that they had not.

Mayor Anderson:

- referenced the four redistricting proposals adhered to the wall of the assembly chambers;
- noted that the Redistricting Board has scheduled another public hearing in the borough during the 60-day comment period; and
- suggested a recess so that members of the public could review the four proposals.

The special assembly meeting recessed at 6:30 p.m. and reconvened at 6:47 p.m.

Mayor Anderson opened the public hearing.

The following persons spoke in favor of proposal number one: Mr. Ken Slauson and Mr. Stan Tucker.

The following persons spoke in favor of proposal number three: Ms. Jean Woods, Ms. Ruth McMullen, Ms. Lucille Frey, and Ms. Kristie Van Gorder.

The following persons spoke in favor of proposal number four: Ms. Kristie VanGorder and Mr. Wrex Diem.

Mr. Pete Probasco suggested another proposal to the Redistricting Board to follow the existing district boundaries.

Discussion followed regarding the statistical deviation of the targeted district populations.

Mr. Gatti:

- advised that the statistical deviation is plus or minus ten percent, with the allowance for overage based upon a constitutionally sound reason.

Ms. Barbara Miller commented that the borough should not give up any land.

Ms. Rose Smith reminded the assembly to consider school communities.

Ms. Kristie VanGorder, Wasilla City Clerk, spoke to the needs of the city in regard to expansion and annexation.

Ms. Lucy Hope expressed opposition to annexation to the south and rather suggested annexation to the north.

There being no others who wished to be heard, Mayor Anderson closed the public hearing and discussion moved to the assembly.

The special assembly meeting recessed at 7:08 p.m. and reconvened at 7:15 p.m.

Assemblymember Colver joined the special meeting at 7:15 p.m. via teleconference.

Mayor Anderson suggested that the assembly review one proposal at a time.

MOTION: Assemblymember DeVilbiss moved to adopt AM No. 01-036, with redistricting proposal number three, and include a recommendation to that state that in the future local governments be allowed more time to address local redistricting issues and to allow more time for public input at the local level.

Assemblymember DeVilbiss:

- stated that he does not believe that the Redistricting Board will allow four house districts within the borough boundaries; and
- commented that he would like to know the census numbers for the Peters Creek and the Chugiak areas.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- expansion to the north versus expansion into the Peters Creek area;
- the last figures given regarding the census count for 2000;
- the city of Wasilla's needs in regard to expansion;
- the need to keep population groups together;
- the new district being an all residential district with very little to offer to the state in terms of economic development;
- lack of continuity regarding social groups;
- the movement of census blocks into different districts in order to accomplish the best alternative for redistricting; and
- expansion of district two into the Point MacKenzie area, with the Little Susitna River as the western boundary, for the purpose of aligning communities with common interests.

WITHDRAW: Assemblymember DeVilbiss requested to withdraw his previous motion. There were no objections.

MOTION: Assemblymember DeVilbiss moved to adopt AM No. 01-036 with redistricting proposal number one.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- district one wrapping around to include Sutton;
- dividing the community of Palmer;
- the need to keep communities aligned;
- the possibility of two seats for the Palmer area; and
- the probability that the Redistricting Board will look more closely at proposal number one.

Mayor Anderson suggested that the assembly review proposal number two.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- the negatives associated with connecting the Chickaloon area and areas west of Wasilla;
- having no central business district and a mostly residential district with some recreation;
- district three encompassing Palmer nicely, but not adequately representing the Lake Louise or Sutton areas;
- wrap-around districts and gerrymandering; and
- contiguous communities.

Mayor Anderson suggested continued discussion regarding proposal number three.

Discussion continued regarding:

- the possible extension of district two to the Little Susitna River in order to align communities with common interests;
- correct representation in the Point MacKenzie area; and
- district four being isolated.

Mayor Anderson suggested discussion regarding proposal number four.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- proposal number four being the preferred scenario for the city of Wasilla;
- exclusion of the wrap-around district number one;
- possible modifications to the proposal to extend district number two to incorporate all of the area to the Little Susitna River; and
- a more rural lifestyle toward the Sutton area.

Mayor Anderson:

- reviewed support for the different proposals; and
- suggested continued discussion regarding proposal number four and possible modifications.

Discussion continued regarding:

- keeping the core area together;
- good representation for the Palmer area;
- proposal number three not retaining contiguous areas; and
- opposition to wrapping district one to the Glenn Highway.

WITHDRAW: Assemblymember DeVilbiss withdrew his previous motion to accept redistricting proposal number one.

MOTION: Assemblymember Kelly moved to accept redistricting proposal number four for the purposes of discussion and amendment.

VOTE: The motion to accept redistricting proposal number four for the purposes of discussion and amendment failed with Assemblymembers Colver, Jansen, and Kelly in favor and Assemblymembers DeVilbiss, Colberg, and Simpson opposed. (Tie vote) The motion failed with Mayor Anderson invoking his voting privilege in the negative.

MOTION: Assemblymember DeVilbiss moved to accept redistricting proposal number three for the purposes of discussion and amendment.

Discussion continued regarding:

- boundary changes to allow for expansion.

MOTION: Assemblymember Jansen moved to call for the question.

VOTE: The motion to stop debate passed without objection.

GENERAL CONSENT: The motion to accept redistricting proposal number three, for the purposes of discussion and amendment, passed without objection.

MOTION: Assemblymember DeVilbiss moved to accept AM No. 01-036, redistricting proposal number three, with the recommendation to the state that in future local governments be allowed more time to address local redistricting issues and to allow more time for public input at the local level.

MOTION: Assemblymember Kelly moved a primary amendment to amend the language to consider the future population of the areas involved in redistricting.

Discussion followed regarding:

- support for the consideration of future populations;
- Article VI, Section 6, of the Alaska Constitution, pertaining to district boundaries; and
- the inability to account for future population estimates based on constitutional requirements.

WITHDRAW: Assemblymember Kelly requested to withdraw the primary amendment. There was no objection.

Ms Finny:

- moved census blocks to different areas via computer to account for the assembly's recommendations.

Discussion continued regarding:

- district one having the greatest variance;
- the increase in population numbers when moving side roads off of the Wasilla-Fishhook Road into district number one and the decrease in population numbers resulting in district number three; and
- manipulating district boundaries in order to even out the population estimates.

The special assembly meeting recessed at 8:32 p.m. and reconvened at 8:43 p.m.

Mr. Duffy:

- commented that fairly even population numbers could be obtained by manipulating census blocks in district number two by taking the area east of Trunk Road and putting it into district number four, with the area south of Williwaw Subdivision to the Parks Highway being placed in district number two.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- the continued manipulation of census blocks to even out the population estimates for each district.

Mr. Duffy:

- reviewed the modifications made thus far based on the assembly's recommendations.

MOTION: Assemblymember Colberg moved a primary amendment to proposal number three, to leave the census blocks in districts two and four, to accommodate for the expansion of the city of Wasilla.

MOTION: Assemblymember Kelly moved a secondary amendment to proposal number three to adjust the census blocks on the Bogard Road side of Wasilla Lake.

Mr. Duffy:

- suggested adjustment on the east side of Wasilla Lake.

Ms. Finny:

- continued to manipulate census blocks via computer to account for the assembly's recommendations.

VOTE: The secondary amendment to proposal number three to adjust the census blocks on the Bogard Road side of Wasilla Lake passed without objection.

VOTE: The primary amendment to proposal number three, to leave the census blocks in districts two and four to accommodate for the expansion of the city of Wasilla, passed without objection.

Discussion continued regarding:

- recommended changes to proposal number three.

MOTION: Assemblymember Simpson moved to call for the question.

VOTE: The motion to stop debate failed with Assemblymembers DeVilbiss, Colberg, and Simpson in favor.

The special assembly meeting recessed at 9:30 p.m. and reconvened at 9:35 p.m.

MOTION: Assemblymember Kelly moved a primary amendment to include Hatcher Pass in district three.

VOTE: The primary amendment passed without objection.

MOTION: The main motion to accept AM No. 01-036, redistricting proposal number three, with the recommendation to the state that future local governments be allowed more time to address local redistricting issues and to allow more time for public input at the local level, as amended, passed without objection.

V. MAYOR AND ASSEMBLY COMMENTS

The Mayor, members of the assembly, and Mr. Duffy thanked members of the staff for their efforts during the redistricting proposal process.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The special meeting adjourned at 9:51 p.m.

TIMOTHY L. ANDERSON, Borough Mayor
ATTEST:

SANDRA A. DILLON, Borough Clerk

Minutes approved: May 1, 2001