

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH SPECIAL MEETING
ASSEMBLY/SCHOOL BOARD SEPTEMBER 10, 2002

I. CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on September 10, 2002, at the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly Chambers, Palmer, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Mayor Timothy L. Anderson. The purpose was a joint meeting between the assembly and school board.

II. ROLL CALL

Assembly members present and establishing a quorum were:

Ms. Sara Jansen, Assembly District No. 2 (Deputy Mayor)
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

Assembly members absent and excused were:

Mr. J. Bruce Bush, Assembly District No. 1
Ms. Kelly Ladere, Assembly District No. 7

School Board members present and establishing a quorum were:

Mr. Carl Gatto, Seat B (arrived at 6:15 p.m.)
Ms. Linda Menard, Seat C
Mr. Mike Chmielewski, Seat E
Mr. Larry DeVilbiss, Seat F
Mr. Daniel Contini, Seat G (School Board President)

School Board members absent and excused were:

Mr. Rob Wells, Seat A
Mr. Bob Johnson, Seat D

Borough staff in attendance were:

Ms. Sandra Dillon, Borough Clerk
Mr. John Duffy, Borough Manager
Mr. Jim Swing, Public Works Director
Ms. Tammy Clayton, Finance Director

School district staff in attendance were:

Mr. Bob Doyle, Acting Superintendent

Mayor Anderson announced that Senator Stevens has provided the borough with an American Flag that was flown over the Capitol in Washington, D.C. and the borough will be flying it here tomorrow in honor of the 9/11 anniversary.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

There being no objections, the agenda was approved as presented.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was led by Dwight Probasco.

V. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There were no persons present who wished to testify.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Building Construction Progress (MSB 2.12.075)

Mr. Swing reported regarding school projects:

- Houston High School. The expansion completion date is November 19, 2002. The work in progress on the building interior and exterior is about 76 percent complete as of August 31 and the site work has been accomplished. The final grading on the ball fields and soccer fields is in progress. The interior is 85 percent complete and the mechanical is complete and the boilers have been started. The HVAC system is 90 percent complete. The drop-in electrical work is 97 percent complete and permanent power has been put into the school. There are at present three notices of intent to claim on file with unidentified amounts to be determined at a later date - no supporting documentation or backup has been issued. The contractor's most recent submitted schedule shows a substantial completion date of November 12, 2002. The current contract amount is a little over \$14 million.
- Ron Larson Elementary School. The contractor completed all warranty work May 2002. The school sign is in the process of being designed and will be installed before winter.
- Turning Lanes for Larson Elementary and Teeland Middle. The turning lanes on Seldon Road are in the design process and are slated to be constructed first thing next summer; they are currently waiting for both the department of education and the department of transportation's design approval.
- Wasilla High School Remodel. The contractor is at 95 percent completion of stage I and about 80 percent of all the work on the project is complete. An extension of two weeks was issued in consideration of extra work occasioned by conditions discovered after demolition which didn't show up on the original plans. Through the commendable efforts of the contractor and the school district custodian and maintenance staff, the students returned on time. In the second week most of the minor problems had been resolved. Staff and students have adapted to the inconveniences related to staging and construction activities occurring during the school day. As many as 90 workers toiled long hours in the final week of August and through the holiday before September 3rd. Custodians from around the district, kitchen staff, and maintenance personnel teamed up over the final week to get furniture, equipment, and books back into the classrooms. Stage I work will be inspected for substantial completion on September 23 and the lower west classroom wing will be ready for occupancy by mid-October, followed shortly by the little theater. All work on the project is anticipated to be completed by the end of the year.

Mayor Anderson and Assemblymember Jansen inquired as to current status and impact of the construction inconveniences on the high school staff and students.

Mr. Probasco, Principal, Wasilla High School:

- reported that it was a pretty typical second week of school;
- spoke to how they were handling the temporary inconveniences;
- noted they do not have access to the construction areas;
- said the contractor has done an excellent job of sealing off the west wing;
- commented that Wasilla staff is doing an excellent job and the students are making it work; and
- spoke to the new lighting being well received as well as new commons area.

[School Board Member Gatto entered chambers at 6:15 p.m.]

Mr. Swing continued:

- Teeland Middle School. All the change order work and project warranties were accomplished by August. There were some minor issues that remain to be negotiated with the contractor and a close-out change order will be submitted to the assembly for approval in October that will close out the borough's work on the school.
- Burchell High School Addition. The addition is complete except for paving the auxiliary parking lot. The cost is currently being reviewed by the department of education and they expect to pave it next summer.
- Sherrod Elementary Replacement. Construction started in mid-June and the site excavation and backfill footing foundation walls are now complete. The interior mechanical and electrical rough-in is proceeding in the lower classroom wing, and the roofing and trusses are being installed. The project is about 38 percent complete.

- Districtwide Technology Upgrade. Design is underway by AMC Engineers and the school district. New servers are being purchased.
- Palmer High School Fire Sprinkler System. Design is 95 percent complete. The project will be advertised for bid in October with construction to be completed August 10, 2003.
- Su Valley High School Fire Sprinkler System. Design is just beginning. The contract will be set later and it will have the same complete date of August 10, 2003.
- New Boilers for Palmer High and Su Valley. Boilers at each school have been replaced with the help of the school district maintenance staff.
- Pioneer Peak Elementary. Plans to upgrade the air handling system are in the works during the next school break.
- Butte Elementary. The gym asbestos tile removal was advertised this summer. The bids exceeded available funds. Plans are to re-advertise and try to do the work during this year's Christmas break.
- Glacier View Elementary. Plans are to pave the road leading into the school plus the parking lot. A change order for Wilder Construction has been made, but since school has started, it is doubtful that the work will get done until next summer.

Questions and discussion ensued regarding the reason for replacement of the air handling system at Pioneer Peak Elementary School.

B. Assessments and Testing - Presentation by Connie Lutz

Connie Lutz is an art teacher at Colony Middle School and doctoral student at Ohio State University in assessment. She also works as an assessment specialist for the school district and is recognized around the state and by the department of education as one of the leading experts on assessments.

Ms. Lutz gave an overhead slide presentation regarding the topics of context for educational reform, purposes of assessment, statewide mandated tests, uses and misuses of assessment results, and recent school district test results.

Ms. Lutz:

- described the Goals 2000 Program under which educational standards were developed by all the national education organizations and adopted by the states;
- discussed the recent impact of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, commonly known as "No Child Left Behind" in terms of accountability;
- discussed the high school graduation qualifying exam, benchmark exam, and the terra nova exam;
- stated that the Mat-Su Borough School District wants to improve student learning as opposed to trying to raise test scores;
- emphasized that the number one purpose of all assessment is to improve student learning;
- noted that we need to use the mandated exams to improve student learning, not put USDA-type stickers on schools;
- spoke to some of the uses and misuses of assessment results, noting that it is important to compare from year to year, not group to group;
- discussed student performance on the high school graduation qualifying exam for the year 2000;
- described the types of questions contained in the exams;
- noted that a sample test is on the Anchorage School District's website and the department of education's website; and
- stated the majority of our test results are falling right around the 50 percentile.

Brief discussion and questions ensued following the presentation. Mayor Anderson thanked Connie for her presentation and stated that it was one of the most informative presentations he has seen in a long time.

The meeting recessed at 7:05 p.m. and reconvened at 7:15 p.m.

C. Wasilla Area Elementary School Site Selection Committee.

Assemblymember Colver:

- discussed creating a site selection committee for Wasilla Elementary;
- stated that there have been several other requests – Vo-Tech High School, Valley Pathways; and one other;
- noted that it might behoove the two bodies to come together and look at the district's perspective and demographics;

and

- said he is looking for feedback and direction from the board on a Wasilla Area school and he is also supportive of the other projects.

Mr. Doyle:

- spoke to demographics stating that a new Wasilla area school would be about three years down the road;
- noted that Tanaina Elementary will be sorely taxed in addition to the Wasilla core and Palmer core areas due to high densities;
- stated that the issue for the board would be planning a future school three years out and a site selection committee would study where the kids live, traffic, transportation, and availability of land; and
- opined that it is good planning to try to reserve about 10 acres of land somewhere in Wasilla and Palmer before it gets cost prohibitive.

School Board Member Menard stated she would be interested in participating in the site selection committee.

Assemblymember Jansen spoke to the difference between advanced planning and site selection.

Mr. Duffy explained the site selection process, noting one of the purposes is to reserve property for a new school at today's prices rather than 10 years from now.

Assemblymember Colver:

- discussed population growth in the Shrock/Pittman and Seldon areas and the possibility of needing a new school in those areas in the relative near future;
- also noted that Swanson and Sherrod will probably outgrow their capacities and need a new school in the Palmer area; and
- spoke to the demographics of young families moving to the borough.

Assemblymember Kelly:

- reflected on the comprehensive plan and what it could mean to the future, not just for a 10 or 20-year-period, but for an indefinite period in the areawide borough;
- emphasized the need to identify land areas for future schools; and
- thinks that site selection is very important, but similar to what the state has done with the university land, we need to think far down the road and develop a strategy.

Mayor Anderson asked if there was any further discussion on this item. None was offered.

D. Update on School Bonding - Tammy Clayton.

Ms. Clayton:

- reported that she and Mr. Swing met with two of the school project managers and spoke with them on the school projects that were financed by the last four bond issues;
- reported that five of the projects are complete (see memorandum, last page in packet);
- reported that there is \$900,000 left over from the Meadow Lakes project, approximately \$3.2 million from Teeland, and \$1.6 million from Larson;
- noted that they believe they will need approximately \$1.5 million as a contingency for the projects not yet completed (previously reported on by Mr. Swing); and
- noted that in order to redirect that money to other projects, it would require approval of the department of education with evidence of voter approval.

Discussion and questions ensued concerning:

- suggested ways to use the leftover bond money – Wasilla High School windows; Sherrod School sidewalks, and safety measures in the unpaved portion of Gulkana Street; and
- the turning lanes at Teeland and Larson elementary schools.

Mr. Duffy explained that if there was a situation where we had a project on a state transportation improvement

program, which the turning lanes are, that we could use the money as part of a match and it would move the project higher up the list.

Ms. Clayton:

- clarified the 70/30 split means that when the debt payment on this money is paid, the state reimburses at 70 percent on school projects;
- clarified the process for redirecting the money to other projects; and
- emphasized the final closeout audit still has to be done and they can't do the final audit until the turn lanes are complete so that DOE has the exact dollar amount that was spent on each individual project.

Further discussion continued regarding:

- actual construction costs versus estimates, which accounts for the surplus;
- the difficulty in getting the department of education to approve changes;
- what happens to the surplus money after the project is complete – redirect it to another project or return it to the state to reduce the debt; and
- whether the money could be used for carpet replacement in some of the older schools.

Assemblymember Jansen asked for a staff report on Proposition C.

Mr. Doyle explained that there is concern or confusion over lack of information about what Proposition C would mean for Mat-Su. The majority of the school projects that are going to be on the general obligation bonds are for rural areas, not urban areas. There is also concern that Fairbanks and Kenai do not have a need right now for new school construction as their enrollments are declining. There is also a big concern about what the voters of Mat-Su would get from these general obligation bonds. The only thing they would be eligible to get is, if the rural area schools are taken care of, we would have authorization at 70/30 for Department of Education approved projects and 60/40 for non Department of Education projects for bonding subsequent to that. If the general obligation bonds fail, we will not have the option to go to bond ourselves. The issue is how do we get the word out that there may not be a specific project listed in the GO bonds, but it will be good for us if we intend to build a food and nutrition service center.

Assemblymember Jansen suggested that the administration and the school district work together to put out an informational flyer to the voters explaining what a yes vote would mean versus a no vote.

Assemblymember Simpson inquired whether a flyer would be considered lobbying.

Ms. Dillon:

- commented that there are some laws guiding us on using public funds for use of facilities in propositions that are on a ballot; and
- noted that we need to be aware of the laws and stay within those confines.

Assemblymember Simpson asked if Mr. Doyle could re-create in a memo his comments concerning Proposition C. Mr. Doyle said he would be happy to.

School Board Member Contini:

- commented that Carl Rose will be putting about \$50,000 into an advertizing campaign;
- noted that he will be meeting with him tomorrow to discuss the school board's participation in the campaign that includes distributing a brochure; and
- informed the school district received a letter asking for a donation.

Further discussion and comments continued with regard to the GEO bonds.

VII. SCHOOL BOARD, MAYOR , ASSEMBLY, AND STAFF COMMENTS

Ms. Dillon:

- commented on her handouts containing information concerning the election;
- noted that the election notice gives a list of the precincts, polling places, and what is on the ballot;

- commented on the task ahead and meeting the challenge of an increase in precincts from 25 to 33 and the recruitment of 140 election officials; and
- called attention to the special luncheon notice from the Palmer Chamber of Commerce giving an annual hero's award in remembrance of 9/11.

Mr. Doyle noted there will be a lot of activities tomorrow at our area schools in remembrance of 9/11.

Mr. Duffy had no comments.

School Board member DeVilbiss:

- commented that they heard that the assembly was interested in the school board supporting the Youth Court; and
- asked where the information came from and the thinking behind it.

Mayor Anderson responded that he had a meeting with Youth Court individuals and they were discussing areas of funding. The school board was one of those areas discussed. The assembly funded \$28,000 for the Youth Court.

School Board member Gatto:

- applauded the distribution to all the schools of the video tape "God Bless America." which tape will be shown tomorrow;
- noted that the video was well done and that he has high hopes the community will hear about it and realize that the schools have a very active interest in creating a feeling of patriotism.

School Board member Chmielewski:

- expressed appreciation for tonight's meeting;
- applauded Ms. Lutz's presentation and discussion; and
- looks forward to the next meeting.

School Board member Menard:

- thanked Kim Floyd for obtaining the video God Bless America;
- recognized the new Interim Superintendent and new members to his team in the audience: Lebron McVail, Jack Sherman, Scott Schwald, who have been very supportive of Mr. Doyle;
- queried the Clerk whether an elected official can work the polls; and
- summarized the new home school program.

School Board member Contini:

- discussed the enrollment report and noted there are many schools very close to capacity and some over capacity;
- noted the area is growing and keeping up with the growth is going to be a challenge; and
- expressed appreciation for the meeting and discussion tonight.

Assemblymember Colver:

- commented that it was a good, productive meeting;
- noted that tomorrow is going to be a somber day for America and our community as we count our blessings;
- encouraged reflecting on the freedoms that we enjoy in this country; and
- expressed pride in our school district and applauded the good work.

Assemblymember Jansen:

- commented that she is looking forward to the next presentation by Ms. Lutz and that she found it very interesting;
- spoke to the enrollment report; and
- requested that the district give the assembly enrollment reports at least through the count when they give their reports at regular meetings.

Assemblymember Kelly:

- expressed appreciation for the school board members;

- commented that it was a very informative meeting;
- queried the status of number of teachers; and
- thanked the board members for their service.

Assemblymember Simpson commented that it has been her pleasure to serve with the board members over the last couple of years.

Mayor Anderson thanked the assembly and the school board for the meeting.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The special meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

TIMOTHY L. ANDERSON, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:

SANDRA A. DILLON, Borough Clerk

Minutes approved: October 15, 2002