

I. CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on September 11, 2012, at the Mat-Su Borough School District Administration Building, 501 N. Gulkana Street, Palmer, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Mayor DeVilbiss for the purpose of conducting a joint Assembly/School Board meeting.

II. ROLL CALL

Assembly members present and establishing a quorum were:

Mr. Warren Keogh, Assembly District No. 1
Mr. Noel Woods, Assembly District No. 2
Mr. Ronald Arvin, Assembly District No. 3 (*Deputy Mayor*)
Mr. Steve Colligan, Assembly District No. 4
Mr. Darcie K. Salmon, Assembly District No. 5
Mr. Jim Colver, Assembly District No. 6
Mr. Vern Halter, Assembly District No. 7

School Board members present and establishing a quorum were:

Mr. Mike Dunleavy, Seat A
Ms. Sarah Welton, Seat B
Ms. Susan Pougher, Seat C
Mr. Ole Larson, Seat D
Mr. Neal Lacy, Seat F
Ms. Lynn Gattis, Seat G

School Board Members absent and excused were:

Mr. Erick Cordero, Seat E

Staff in attendance were:

Ms. Lonnie R. McKechnie, Borough Clerk
Ms. Brenda J. Henry, Executive Assistant to the Borough Clerk
Mr. Nicholas Spiropoulos, Borough Attorney
Mr. John Moosey, Borough Manager
Mr. George Hays, Assistant Borough Manager
Ms. Tammy Clayton, Finance Director
Ms. Shaune O'Neil, Public Works Director
Mr. Eric Phillips, Community Development Director
Mr. Marc Van Dongen, Port Director
Mr. Dennis Brodigan, Emergency Services Director

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was led by Mr. John Moosey, Borough Manager.

(Mayor DeVilbiss exited the meeting at 6:01 p.m. and Deputy Mayor Arvin assumed the duties of the Chair.)

IV. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

The following persons spoke to concerns regarding the site selection process for the South Palmer Elementary School: Ms. Dina Sorensen.

V. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Deputy Mayor Arvin:

- noted that the agenda had not yet been approved; and
- queried if there were any changes to the agenda.

School Board member Welton requested a moment of silence in honor of Patriot's Day.

Deputy Mayor Arvin noted that if there was no objection, a moment of silence will be observed directly after the approval of the agenda.

There was no objection noted.

GENERAL CONSENT: The agenda was approved as amended without objection.

(A moment of silence was observed and audience participation was resumed.)

The following person spoke to concerns with determining lawful signatures: Mr. Neil Snider.

The following persons spoke regarding concerns with using farm land for school sites: Ms. Barbara Landi and Mr. John Olsen.

The following person spoke in support of "Option B" for the new Palmer School Site and opined that it is the most fiscally responsible choice: Mr. Matthew Beck.

The following person spoke to concerns with moving too quickly with selecting a site for a new elementary school: Ms. Terry Snyder.

VI. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

A. Review Capital Construction Plan *(MSB 2.12.075(A))*

Mr. Moosey:

- stated that the GANTT chart was sent out to the joint body, which illustrates the status of the projects;
- related that all projects are on track with construction; and
- stated that he would answer questions of the body.

School Board Member Pougher advised that some members were unable to open the attachment and have no information.

Mr. Moosey:

- opined that the Capital Construction Plan goes hand-in-hand with bond projects;
- stated that if he could have a few moments that he would be prepared to discuss them with the joint body; and
- requested to take up agenda item “B.”

Deputy Mayor Arvin queried if there was any objection to take up item “B.”

There was no objection noted.

B. “Pay As You Go” Facility Funding (*Requested by Mayor DeVilbiss and Dr. Paramo*)

Dr. Deena Paramo, School Board Superintendent:

- noted that it was Mayor DeVilbiss who was interested in the “Pay as you go” facility funding, in order to determine if it were feasible; and
- advised that Mr. Luke Fulp would make the presentation.

Mr. Luke Fulp, School District Chief Business Official, provided a presentation regarding “Pay As You Go” Facility Funding.

School Board Member Larson queried if a 60/40 split with the State was used to model the report.

Mr. Fulp affirmed the query.

Assemblymember Halter queried the jurisdictions that use “pay as you go.”

Mr. Fulp stated that he is not aware of any within Alaska.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- that generally it is municipalities who use this method rather than School Districts;
- that School Districts generally have a need for the funds up front, even though the interest payment is significant;
- that a school facility was built in Colorado with the “Pay As You Go” Facility Funding program, but that it was backed by a certificate of participation first, and then general operating levy to pay it off in five years;
- that it is difficult for a current board to encumber a future board;

- that by going before the voters for approval, that it would ensure that future boards are obligated by the voters;
- how the mill rate would be impacted by “Pay As You Go” Facility Funding;
- the likelihood of pay-as-you-go success;
- how student population would affect “Pay As You Go” Facility Funding;
- that voters would have to levy a higher tax in order to make the “Pay As You Go” Facility Funding Program feasible;
- the need for new elementary schools;
- that high schools are more expensive;
- that it is better to bond and spread the debt over a greater period of time, as it is literally shifting the tax burden from one generation to the next; and
- the opinion that “Pay As You Go” Facility Funding option would not work with the growth the Borough is experiencing.

(Item A discussion was resumed.)

Mr. Moosey:

- spoke to the GANTT chart, which lays out all projects by school;
- advised that all projects are on track;
- noted that in August the Assembly approved the design for the athletic complexes at Wasilla and Houston High Schools, which includes track and turf;
- further noted that approval was also given for Colony and Palmer High School track designs;
- related that construction will begin on the Mat-Su Day School in the summer of 2013; and
- spoke to all of the roof replacements that have occurred this year.

Deputy Mayor Arvin:

- opined that the chart should be visible to the public on the Borough’s website;
- noted that the voters approved a very large bond; and
- opined that it would be beneficial to share the status of the projects with the general public.

Mr. Moosey:

- agreed that it was a good idea; and
- related that the School District is going to do that as soon as they are provided with the information.

B. Borough Area Schools Site Selection Committee *(Requested by School Board Member Larson)*

School Board Member Larson:

- spoke to the composition of the Borough Area Schools Site Selection Committee;
- provided a history as to the process of how the land was selected for the new Iditarod School;
- provided a list of sites for the new Palmer Elementary School;
- stated that more than one process has been used in selecting sites;
- related that he would like a spreadsheet that outlines why other parcels were not selected; and
- noted he is confused as to the exact process that is used for obtaining sites for schools.

Deputy Mayor Arvin:

- spoke to code changes that may have affected the approach that has been used in the recent past; and
- requested that Mr. Moosey speak to this.

Mr. Moosey:

- advised that the selection of the Machetanz Elementary site was under the purview of the Borough Manager;
- related that the Committee for the most part replaced the Manager's role;
- stated that the choices for the Palmer Elementary School were not alphabetically ranked;
- noted that the process that was used was a "blind process;"
- related that it was an elderly lady who was approached and that she was offended that the broker would not tell her who he was dealing for;
- stated that he tried to talk to her, but she thought that the blind process was underhanded and refused to speak to him anymore;
- related that site selection is based on location and that it also depends on where the utilities are located, as that can impact the selection;
- advised that an expert looked at wetlands on the Knik Goose Bay site and whether it was the best site;
- noted that there was a neighbor that had an airport with a flight path that would be directly over the school; and
- opined that it would be helpful if there was clear direction provided to the Committee.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- concerns that what is requested by the Committee is not what is done by staff;
- that there are properties that need to be acquired;
- that the Committee has set priorities and then they have changed;
- that as the Committee goes along there are more and more issues that arise;
- that some members of the Committee are not confident in staff actions;
- the desire to ensure that due diligence has been done;
- that the main issue is that the process has been revised;
- that it was the late Dr. Burnley who recommended that the Borough use the "double blind" system so the price would not increase due to being a commercial buyer;
- that there was a lot of delay and confusion as to what the broker's role would be;
- the properties to be acquired in the Knik Goose Bay area;
- that the Committee was already moving forward with the Iditarod site, which was already moving forward under the old process;
- that the Committee has always been looking at the property near Wasilla High School;
- how membership rotation has affected the Committee;
- whether or not the process is working well;
- the possibility of reverting to the former process for site selection;
- that the Committee has been trying to accommodate members schedules by moving meeting times to the evening;
- the need to develop a policy manual so that everyone involved understands their roles;

- the desire to work jointly and make the best selections for the community;
- that the Committee is an advisory body to the Assembly;
- the scientific matrix that is used to calculate where a new school is most needed; and
- the need for an outline to identify why a site may have been rejected.

C. Report on Bond Projects (*Requested by School Board Member Gattis*)

Mr. Ken Forrest, School District Chief Business Official in Transition, provided a report on bond projects.

School Board Member Pougher queried the status of the Palmer High School field.

Mr. Forrest related that the Borough Public Works Director indicated that she was aware of the drainage issues with the field and that it will be addressed.

Deputy Mayor Arvin queried the status of the Cottonwood Creek Elementary School access.

Mr. Forrest:

- advised that the road has been constructed;
- noted that the School District conducted a bid to put grass turf on the soccer field and that it will be installed before winter;
- stated that weed control and fertilization will happen next spring; and
- related that the School District will start the legislative effort for the intersection and temporary lighting.

Assemblymember Colver:

- related that the answer came back from the Alaska State Department of Transportation; and
- advised that they would not build the approach as they do not want it used until Phase II is completed.

D. Mat-Su Data Presentation (*Requested by Dr. Paramo*)

Dr. Deena Paramo, School District Superintendent and Mr. Karl Schleich, Snowshoe Elementary Principal and Part-Time Professional Development Director, provided a presentation regarding Adequate Yearly Progress.

Assemblymember Keogh spoke to concerns with a school that has had a consistent downward trend.

Dr. Paramo:

- stated that she knows which school he is speaking of;
- related that over time, the school has lost 25-30 students, which means there are approximately 50 students in the school;
- noted that those 50 students would not impact the overall data; and
- advised that the School District is aware and is monitoring the situation closely.

Assemblymember Keogh noted the contrast in that some schools excel and others spiral downward.

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

School Board Member Gattis:

- stated that she appreciates the lively discussion; and
- thanked the Assembly for working with the School District regarding their concerns.

School Board Member Welton:

- thanked the Assembly for hosting the meeting;
- noted that she appreciates the dialogue; and
- opined that communication can always be improved.

School Board Member Pougher:

- stated that she enjoyed the discussion;
- opined that it was very informative;
- related that she has visited a number of schools, which are very clean; and
- opined that good learning is underway.

School Board Member Larson:

- stated that he enjoys the meetings; and
- noted that he appreciated the moment of silence in honor of Patriot's Day.

School Board Member Lacy:

- related that last year, he was a member of the Borough Area Schools Site Selection Committee;
- noted that he did not enjoy it very much, and opined that the meetings are off track;
- stated that he would like to see more formal meetings conducted and that they be recorded;
- requested information regarding unused allotments for Mat-Su Central School;
- spoke to a gift that Wasilla High School received from Representative Stoltz for the wrestling program;
- related that he was told that a portion of the gift was used for administrative costs and that he would like to know why;
- related that he was riding around Wasilla and had stopped by Larson Elementary School;
- noted that there were young people mowing the lawns;
- stated that he will be visiting more schools;
- noted that this is the first time he has seen schools get good maintenance; and
- thanked those that made the maintenance happen.

School Board President Dunleavy:

- thanked the body for the meeting;
- noted that today is a significant day in America's history; and
- stated that he appreciated the moment of silence.

Assemblymember Woods:

- advised that he appreciated the information on the Borough Area School Site Selection Committee;
- thanked the School District for the Adequate Yearly Progress report; and
- opined that it helps the Assembly in the decision making progress.

Assemblymember Colligan:

- thanked the body for the meeting; and
- stated that he is looking forward to working with the School District on joint projects.

Assemblymember Colver:

- complimented School District staff for their good work; and
- congratulated School Board President Dunleavy and School Board Member Gattis on their recent election victories.

Assemblymember Halter:

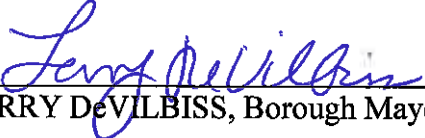
- stated that he enjoyed the Adequate Yearly Progress report; and
- noted that he is glad to know Borough students are doing so well.

Assemblymember Arvin:

- thanked the School District for their hard work;
- opined that they have an excellent staff that works hard;
- spoke to his daughter participating in a national skeet shooting program;
- stated that skeet shooting is a unique activity for western states in particular; and
- thanked the Board for making it a sanctioned sporting event.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:57 p.m.


LARRY DEVILBISS, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:


LONNIE R. McKECHNIE, CMC, Borough Clerk

Minutes Approved: 10/16/12