

I. CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on September 13, 2011, at the Borough Assembly Chambers, 350 E. Dahlia Avenue, Palmer, Alaska. The special meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Mayor Larry DeVilbiss for the purpose of holding 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. Ron Arvin, Assembly District No. 3 (*attended telephonically*)
Mr. Mark Ewing, Assembly District No. 4
Ms. Cindy Bettine, Assembly District No. 5 (*attended telephonically*)
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 (*School Board President*)
Ms. Sarah Welton, Seat B
Ms. Susan Pougher, Seat C
Mr. Erick Cordero, Seat E (*arrived at 6:07 p.m.*)
Mr. Neal Lacy, Seat F
Ms. Lynn Gattis, Seat G

School Board members absent and excused were:

Mr. Ole Larson, Seat D

Staff in attendance were:

Ms. Lonnie McKechnie, CMC, Borough Clerk
Mr. John Moosey, Borough Manager
Ms. Shannon Bodolay, Assistant Borough Attorney
Ms. Elizabeth Gray, Assistant Borough Manager
Ms. Brenda J. Henry, Executive Assistant to the Borough Clerk
Ms. Patty Sullivan, Public Affairs Director
Ms. Tammy Clayton, Finance Director

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor DeVilbiss inquired if there were any changes to the agenda.

GENERL CONSENT: The agenda was approved as presented.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of allegiance was led by Mr. Mike Vrvilo, School District Executive Director of Education.

V. JOINT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

A. Building Construction Progress (*MSB 2.12.075*)

Mr. Dave Anderton, School District Operations and Maintenance provided a report regarding building construction progress.

Assemblymember Keogh queried if there were any plans for repairs to Butte Elementary.

Mr. Anderton advised that it is included, as it is an older school.

Assemblymember Bettine queried plans for the turf project at Palmer High School.

Dr. Paramo:

- related that funds received for turf improvements did not include tracks;
- noted that the track has to be Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible; and
- stated that in order to keep the area in top notch shape that there would have to be a paved access to keep dirt from getting on it.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- fire alarm system replacement at 10 schools;
- that the safety and security bonds are distributed over several schools and over several years;
- how the School District is working to keep schools un-gated and mitigate vandalism; and
- the safety and security study done Districtwide.

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

Dr. Paramo:

- spoke to the code change by the Assembly to change the due date for the School District Capital Improvement Plan (CIP);
- advised that the School District's CIP is ready for review by the School Board; and
- stated that it will be forwarded to the Assembly after the Board reviews it.

Assemblymember Colver:

- stated that he is going to do a code amendment to move the code requirement for this discussion until after October when the election is completed; and
- opined that the timeframe would be more appropriate.

C. Adequate Yearly Progress Report (*Requested by Dr. Paramo*)

Dr. Deena Paramo, School District Superintendent, provided a report regarding adequate yearly progress (AYP) within the School District.

Assemblymember Ewing:

- noted that Wasilla High School has not met the AYP standards for the last several years; and
- opined that there is a problem that needs to be addressed.

Assemblymember Arvin opined that it would appear that meeting 100 percent of the AYP criteria may be an impossible objective.

Dr. Paramo:

- related that discussion is occurring around the United States;
- noted that the School District looks at data in order to gauge improvement rather than to give consequences.
- stated that students qualify for individualized education plans based on the need for different learning styles;
- noted that all children have different learning rates; and
- opined that outside of the debt crisis this is a prime issue in Washington, D.C.

Assemblymember Ewing queried what grades take the High School Qualifying Exam (HSQE).

Dr. Paramo advised that generally it is ninth and tenth graders who take the exam.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- the High School Qualifying Exam;
- concerns that children are being overlooked;
- concerns that teachers are meeting the qualifications necessary for students to progress;
- the fact that the School District is in discussions with the university in order to get curriculums that better prepares teachers for the needs of students;
- percentage of students in the categories for AYP;
- that 86 percent of Borough schools met AYP in the District as a whole;
- the two schools who participated in the School Improvement Plan as a result of the AYP;
- that one of the possibilities for overall school improvement is to change the principal;
- how Wasilla High School is impacted by five years of failing to meet AYP;
- the number of Title One schools in the School District; and
- how the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds impacted Title One Schools.

Mr. Gene Stone, School District Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, provided a special presentation regarding the School District's use of literacy coaches.

Assemblymember Bettine queried the use of literacy coaches.

Dr. Paramo:

- noted that charter schools participate in the literacy training but do not utilize coaches;
- related that smaller schools tend to share literacy coaches; and
- advised that it tends to be based upon the needs of the schools.

Assemblymember Keogh queried if there are math coaches.

Dr. Paramo related that the School District is looking into the use of instructional coaches instead of literacy coaches.

Mayor DeVilbiss inquired how that would be different from a teacher.

Dr. Paramo:

- stated that coaches would work in conjunction with teachers; and
- noted that coaches could also help to identify students with different needs.

D. School District Operations Update *(Requested by Dr. Paramo)*

Dr. Deena Paramo, School District Superintendent provided an update regarding School District operations.

Assemblymember Halter queried fitness programs at the elementary level.

Dr. Paramo:

- noted that there is physical education for 45 minutes;
- stated that the School District understands that fitness does not happen just walking onto the gym floor;
- stated that School Board has directed staff to investigate fitness in other forms;
- advised that every student at Shaw Elementary does 30 minute walk everyday in the gym;
- stated that the District does not want students to have less movement; and
- noted that staff is looking at alternative methods of fitness for students.

Assemblymember Halter queried if there are other schools doing the same as Shaw Elementary.

Dr. Paramo:

- affirmed the query;
- noted that it is related to a book called “Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain”;
- stated that for middle school students the first ten minutes of physical education is a run; and
- noted that research shows that fitness is learned through that type of activity, rather than just sports.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- student-to-teacher ratios being based on projected class sizes;
- how teacher reductions would impact class sizes;
- that the State really values smaller schools;
- that locations where new schools are built actually impacts the way funds come to the District;
- that there are teachers who are Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSA);
- that TOSA are hired by grants to do professional development;
- the number of teachers on special assignment within the School District;
- the School District’s core value of lack of reprisal being to encourage information flow from the bottom up;

- that lack of reprisal does not mean that there is no personal accountability;
- the possibility of the School District implementing a whistle blower policy; and
- the best way to get feedback from the entire system and not just the administrators.

VI. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

The following person provided information regarding homelessness within the School District and invited the body to the next Coalition on Homelessness: Mr. Michael Carson.

The following person thanked the community for their support of Valley Community for Recycling Solutions: Mr. Graydon Murphy, Valley Community for Recycling Solutions.

The following persons spoke to community support of the Professional Development Day for the associations and to concerns with payroll issues: Ms. Jill Showman Mat-Su Education Association President and Ms. Lori Miner, Classified Employees Association President.

Mayor DeVilbiss requested that Dr. Paramo speak to why payroll did not occur for CEA members.

Dr. Paramo:

- stated that the School District uses a program called IFIS, which is a business operating system for payroll;
- related that IFIS has stopped servicing K12 schools;
- noted that Mr. Forrest, who is the Assistant Superintendent had advised that the District needed to replace this system as it was sure to fail;
- noted that the company is no longer making software patches for K12 issues, as it has many different systems;
- advised that the School Board had approved to move to new system;
- noted that the transition had begun last year, but the payroll issue was a conglomeration of issues;
- related that the payroll funds were available but that the program had crashed, which resulted in the inability to get the funds to the federal treasury for disbursement through direct deposit;
- spoke to the many ways that Administration worked to ensure employees were paid;
- noted that due to some locations, that some areas took longer;
- stated that it was a failure of technology;
- noted that the District has been patching the program together as best as possible;
- related that by the time they figured out what the problem was that it was too late to make the bank roll;
- noted that the District is working to ensure this never happens again; and
- advised that a transition of this type takes over a year to be completed.

Mayor DeVilbiss inquired if there was objection to allowing School Board comments before moving on to Assembly business.

There was no objection noted.

School Board Member Cordero:

- apologized for being late to the meeting;
- noted that this is his last joint meeting with Assemblymember Bettine;
- stated that he has appreciated her assistance; and
- thanked her for her service to the community.

School Board Member Welton thanked Assemblymember Bettine for her service.

School Board Member Pougher stated that she is looking forward to a good school year.

School Board President Dunleavy thanked the Assembly for a good meeting.

(The School Board exited the meeting at 7:21 p.m.)

(The meeting recessed at 7:21p.m. and reconvened at 7:33 p.m.)

VII. ASSEMBLY BUSINESS

(Assemblymember Bettine was not on the line after the body reconvened.)

A. Recycling Center Funding Discussion

Assemblymember Keogh:

- stated that he is the one who requested this item be added;
- noted that at the last Assembly meeting the body approved an appropriation for expenditures at the recycle center;
- opined that it might be beneficial for the body to discuss funding;
- stated that he understands that there was a hope to have the necessary equipment in place by now to complete the facility;
- opined that the body does not have to spend a lot of time on this issue; and
- noted that it is his intent to revisit where the center is for the equipment they still need for operations.

Mr. Moosey:

- spoke to the 2008 grant application and approval for the center and equipment;
- noted that at that time, the most important equipment was the glass crusher and scale;
- related that the main building is complete, but that not all of the equipment has been purchased;
- noted that there were match funds from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for most of the equipment that is needed;
- noted that those funds were through the Clean Water Fund;
- advised that after the grant was awarded the EPA decided that the grant would not cover equipment;
- noted that there are funds to match 55 percent of the EPA grant;
- stated that VCRS has indicated that the glass crusher and the scale are no longer the most urgently needed pieces of equipment;

- related that it has now been determined that a conveyor should be the first priority;
- noted that the grant was to be closed out in August of this year;
- stated that because of the change in EPA funding, that the Borough has requested two more years on the grant;
- noted that there are funds in that grant left to be matched;
- stated that the funds were put aside for a contingency;
- related that the building came in for less than anticipated with no change orders; and
- spoke to ways funds could be raised to help the center with securing the equipment they need rather than having to include funds in the next budget.

(Assemblymember Bettine re-entered the meeting telephonically at 7:38 p.m.)

Assemblymember Halter queried if \$400,000 would secure all of the necessary equipment.

Mr. Moosey affirmed the query.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- if there are match funds available through other sources;
- the possibility of looking at grant opportunities and private donations to fund the equipment needs;
- that all of the funds do not have to come from the Borough;
- whether the funds have to occur in the next budget cycle;
- the need for a two year extension;
- Borough obligations for the grant;
- the conveyor being the highest priority;
- what funding is available in order to ensure a fully functional center;
- whether or not funds are being lost at the landfill due to the recycling center;
- the possibility of increasing fees to make up for the short falls;
- fixed long-term overhead at the landfill;
- how the recycling center could extend the life of the landfill;
- the tonnage that goes into the landfill;
- how revenue streams are affected by the recycling center;
- the expectation that the extension will be granted;
- how wages for employees at the VCRS are paid;
- the funds the Borough provides to the center;
- how volunteer hours impact the function of the center;
- the budget of the VCRS;
- the income provided to the center through the sales of recycled materials;
- how funds are raised for the center;
- how unrestricted funds are allocated for specific projects;
- how the recycle center has inspired recycling on a personal level;
- possibility of the recycle center and the landfills working together to provide more recycling options;
- how diverting recyclables positively impacts the landfill;

- how the center came to be and where the funding came from; and
- that no general funds from the Borough are used to fund VCRS.

(Assemblymember Ewing exited the meeting at 8:04 p.m.)

Mayor DeVilbiss queried if a financial history of the recycling center could be provided to the body.

Mr. Moosey affirmed the query.

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

Ms. McKechnie:

- spoke to the joint meeting with the Municipality of Anchorage that was requested by the Mayor;
- noted that it was tentatively scheduled for October 27, 2011, at 2:30 p.m.;
- advised that the Municipality is requesting that the meeting begin at 3:30 p.m.;
- stated that Borough Staff is requesting to take the Assembly on a tour of the prison before the State takes ownership; and
- suggested October 22 as a day for the prison tour.

Assemblymember Halter queried if there was a tour scheduled for September 14.

Mr. Moosey affirmed the query.

Mayor DeVilbiss stated that tour is mainly for the Cities.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- setting a date to tour the Goose Creek Correctional Center; and
- having the Clerk bring back the issue of scheduling the joint meeting at a later date.

[Clerk's note: The Assembly scheduled the tour of the prison for October 6, 2011, at noon.]

Mr. Moosey:

- spoke to the work session regarding the subdivision code changes; and
- queried if there was anything specific that the body would like to occur at that meeting.

Assemblymember Colver:

- opined that it would be beneficial for the body to hear from a panel of industry experts;
- stated that staff should also provide comment;
- opined that there should be an expert to speak to different sections on the proposed changes; and
- spoke to the need to properly determine what will work septic wise on different lots.

Assemblymember Woods:

- noted he agrees it is important to hear from experts; and
- opined that if the Assembly does not take outside comments, that the body will never be able to complete the review of the legislation.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- the possibility of including others in the work session;
- the need to take the comments of industry professionals into consideration;
- who else the body would like to hear comments from;
- the need to hear staff input;
- the importance of ground water issues;
- different systems for septage that should be considered;
- the desire of the body to make it easier to subdivide;
- the possibility of reviewing the legislation section-by-section and taking those issues one at a time;
- the need to approach the work session in an orderly manner;
- the color coded document that contains all suggestions side-by-side;
- the desire to review point-by-point comparison of comments;
- the possibility of including the Platting Board in the work session;
- concerns that unless a person has been through the subdivision process, that they might not understand how difficult it can be to apply Borough code; and
- the possibility of the Mayor setting up the process to work through the legislation.

Assemblymember Woods:

- opined that the School Board needs a thank you for the information that was provided this evening; and
- stated that he was very enlightened by their presentations

Assemblymember Halter:

- noted that some of his recent comments were included in the Frontiersman today regarding the legislation to use public funds to promote the bond packages;
- noted that the Borough pays a state and a federal lobbyist with public funds;
- further noted that Mr. Mystrom is paid by public funds to promote the rail spur; and
- stated that he would like a more in-depth report as to where new proposed schools will be located, should the bond package be adopted by the voters.

Assemblymember Arvin:

- noted that he greatly appreciates the detailed information Ms. Clayton provides;
- stated that he respects her professionally; and
- related that he is looking forward to the information regarding the recycle center.

Assemblymember Bettine:

- stated that the Big Lake Community Council was asked if they wanted to participate in the transportation fair;
- noted that she wonders if other communities were invited to participate; and
- requested more information regarding the transportation fair.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The joint meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.


LARRY DEVILBISS, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:


LONNIE R. McKECHNIE, CMC, Borough Clerk

Minutes approved: 10/18/11