

I. CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on October 10, 2008, at the Borough Assembly Chambers, 350 E. Dahlia Avenue, Palmer, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 12:11 p.m. by Mayor Curtis D. Menard for the purpose of discussing legislative priorities with state and federal lobbyists.

II. ROLL CALL

Assembly members present and establishing a quorum were:

Ms. Lynne Woods, Assembly District No. 1 (*Deputy Mayor*)
Mr. Pete Houston, Assembly District No. 2 (*arrived at 12:18 p.m.*)
Ms. Michelle R. Church, Assembly District No. 3
Ms. Mary Kvalheim, Assembly District No. 4
Ms. Cindy L. Bettine, Assembly District No. 5
Mr. Robert Wells, Assembly District No. 6
Mr. Tom Kluberton, Assembly District No. 7 (*via teleconference*)

Staff in attendance were:

Ms. Lonnie R. McKechnie, Borough Clerk
Mr. John Duffy, Borough Manager
Mr. Nicholas Spiropoulos, Borough Attorney
Ms. Amanda E. Charles, Executive Assistant to the Borough Clerk
Ms. Tammy Clayton, Finance Director
Ms. Linda Brenner, Community Development Director
Mr. Mark Mayo, Planning and Land Use Director
Mr. Dave Hanson, Economic Development Director
Ms. Patty Sullivan, Public Affairs Director

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

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

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Ms. Veronica Slajer, Federal Lobbyist.

V. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

A. DISCUSSION OF LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES WITH STATE AND FEDERAL LOBBYISTS

Mr. Duffy requested that Mr. Ray Gillespie, Borough Lobbyist, provide an update on the upcoming legislative session.

Mr. Gillespie, State Lobbyist:

- spoke regarding a surplus of funding in the State's budget at the end of the fiscal year;
- noted an uncertainty of who would be filling Governor Sara Palin's seat if she is elected to Vice-President;
- advised that the capital budget is a priority and noted that energy needs would need to be a large portion of the upcoming legislative discussions;
- spoke regarding the huge increase in costs to rural communities as it relates to transportation and energy needs;
- stated that there would be quite a bit of discussion on the State's solution to the loss of federal funds for transportation; and
- commented on difficulties with funding for the long range transportation plan;

Assemblymember Church queried State funding of the bonding for roads that the voters approved at the recent election.

Mr. Gillespie:

- stated that he was unaware of any other road bonds that required a State match; and
- noted that when there is local dollars contributed the State elevates that project as a priority.

Assemblymember Woods

- spoke regarding how roads are one of the Borough's major priorities;
- noted that she wanted to be able to consider the projects listed within the transportation bonds;
- expressed her concerns with the volatility of the resource market; and
- opined that there may be difficulty selling the bonds for the prison and the roads.

Assemblymember Bettine:

- spoke regarding the importance of State road infrastructure within the Borough;
- spoke regarding the transportation bonds; and
- noted a need for various transportation routes for the residents of the Borough.

Assemblymember Houston queried last year's legislative priorities.

Mr. Gillespie:

- briefly discussed last year's items which were funded; and
- spoke regarding the difficulties with getting a youth residential treatment facility within the Borough.

Assemblymember Houston expressed his concerns regarding adolescent substance abuse issues and the need to address them.

Ms. Veronica Slajer, Federal Lobbyist:

- introduced her partners Mr. Karl Ohls and Ms. Mary Hiratsuka;
- spoke regarding the uncertainty at the federal level as it pertains to who the new President of the United States will be and how that individual will affect the federal government;
- advised on packaging economic stimulus packages;
- spoke regarding how to get the delegation involved with monitoring more local and state issues;
- commented on the importance of how the Borough packages their projects; and
- stated that because of the money that the oil in Alaska provides, there will be a longer timeframe before the “hard times” hit Alaska as it has in the lower 48 states.

Assemblymember Kluberton:

- noted the importance for developing a road side rest stop plan to increase tourism;
- commented on policy related concerns versus funding issues, such as selling property that has no access;
- expressed his concern with funding for the Borough’s transportation needs; and
- noted the need for funding for a fire station in the Caswell Lakes area.

Assemblymember Woods:

- spoke regarding sustainability;
- commented on how sustainability will help the Borough get through the hard times;
- spoke to the importance of increasing the local university to a four-year program; and
- spoke regarding technological advances that are needed in Alaska.

Mr. Gillespie:

- stated that the rail spur to Point MacKenzie has huge economic potential; and
- noted that if the rail spur could be finished before the new pipeline, it would open up another revenue source.

Assemblymember Kluberton:

- asked if the global slow down has effected mineral research; and
- pointed out that research has been performed in the Talkeetna area for copper and other minerals.

Ms. Slajer:

- stated that mineral research has slowed down;
- spoke regarding building relationships with the companies that perform mineral research;
- opined the economic slow down was not a question of when it would bounce back, but how far down it will go and for how long; and
- reported that the expectation is 15 years.

Assemblymember Bettine:

- spoke regarding the pipeline and Alaskan's support for the project; and
- asked if the pipeline going through Port MacKenzie was a national issue.

Mr. Duffy:

- affirmed the query; and
- spoke regarding a presentation the Borough will be putting on regarding building the rail line.

Ms. Slajer:

- spoke regarding how the coal market in Alaska will be negatively effected;
- noted the need for continual discussions between the bodies; and
- stressed the importance of building relationships at the federal level once the new President has been announced.

Assemblymember Church asked if renewable energies was an area that the Borough should build on.

Ms. Slajer affirmed the query.

Assemblymember Church asked Mr. Duffy if the septic disposal facility was federally funded.

Mr. Duffy:

- stated that the facility was federally funded;
- commented on the Environmental Protection Agency's process; and
- opined that this project should be on the list of legislative priorities.

Assemblymember Church stated that the septic treatment facility should be on the cities' lists as well.

Discussion ensued regarding septic disposal facilities.

Mr. Ohls, Federal Lobbyist:

- stated that everything has stalled as far as further appropriations;
- commented on how the federal government is planning for fiscal year 2010;
- spoke regarding the economic impact within the State and the region; and
- stated that they should meet again after the federal election.

Mr. Duffy spoke regarding needed policy changes at the federal level for road funding when a match is provided by the local government.

Assemblymember Bettine suggested having a meeting with the delegation when they are in the area.

Ms. Slajer supported the idea.

Assemblymember Bettine spoke regarding the importance of communication between the local, state, and federal bodies.

Mr. Gillespie:

- stated that the legislature has been in special session most of the year; and
- stressed the importance of finding the appropriate time to hold a joint meeting in order to enable a greater attendance.

Assemblymember Woods queried when the 2009 State Legislative Session begins.

Mr. Gillespie stated that it would begin on January 20, 2009.

Mr. Duffy stated that the Borough is currently working on getting on the Governor's project list at the federal level.

Assemblymember Kluberton stated that it would be important to keep an eye on the development of the South Denali project.

Assemblymember Woods:

- addressed the work plan at the federal level; and
- requested clarification regarding why Hatcher Pass ski area was not in the plan.

Mr. Duffy:

- stated that there was \$6 million in-hand from the Federal Highways Administration, which came from combining two other projects; and
- noted that the Borough has requested further funding from the Department of Commerce for help with the lodge and other facilities.

VI. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

(There was no one presented who wished to speak.)

VII. MAYOR, ASSEMBLY, AND STAFF COMMENTS

Assemblymember Bettine:

- thanked everyone for their attendance at the meeting; and
- stated that she looked forward to hearing from the lobbyists on what the Borough's next steps should be.

Assemblymember Woods spoke regarding increasing communications between the Assembly, Borough, State, and Federal lobbyists.

Assemblymember Church thanked everyone for their attendance.

Mr. Gillespie opined that the Borough should consider getting involved in the 10-year fiscal planning process that started this year.

Ms. Slajer:

- noted that today's conversations were constructive;
- stated that it would be good to get together once or twice a year; and
- spoke regarding developing a structured program for their next meeting.

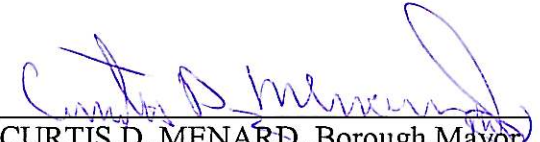
Mr. Ohls stressed the importance of developing strong relationships at the federal level.

Mayor Menard:

- noted that the Port MacKenzie project will not move forward unless the rail spur can be continued in that direction; and
- expressed his desire to see that project grow.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The special meeting adjourned at 1:19 p.m.


CURTIS D. MENARD, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:


LONNIE R. McKECHNIE, CMC, Borough Clerk

Minutes approved: 11/18/08