

I. CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on December 11, 2007, at the Borough Assembly Chambers, 350 E. Dahlia Avenue, Palmer, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m. by Mayor Curtis D. Menard for the purpose of discussing the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension Project.

II. ROLL CALL

Assembly members present and establishing a quorum were:

Ms. Lynne Woods, Assembly District No. 1
Mr. Pete Houston, Assembly District No. 2
Ms. Michelle R. Church, Assembly District No. 3
Ms. Mary Kvalheim, Assembly District No. 4 (*via teleconference*)
Ms. Cindy L. Bettine, Assembly District No. 5
Mr. Robert Wells, Assembly District No. 6

Assembly members absent and excused were:

Mr. Tom Kluberton, Assembly District No. 7

Staff in attendance were:

Ms. Michelle M. McGehee, CMC, Borough Clerk
Mr. John Duffy, Borough Manager
Mr. Nicholas Spiropoulos, Borough Attorney
Ms. Lonnie R. McKechnie, Deputy Borough Clerk

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

Assemblymember Bettine requested that Audience Participation take place after the discussion of item A on the agenda.

There was no objection noted.

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

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Ms. Patty Sullivan, Public Affairs Director.

V. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

A. PRESENTATIONS REGARDING THE PORT MACKENZIE RAIL EXTENSION PROJECT

Mr. Duffy:

- spoke regarding the matrix that was developed which evaluated the criteria for the rail extension; and
- introduced Mr. Joe Perkins of Perkins Consulting.

Mr. Joe Perkins, Perkins Consulting:

- introduced the project team;
- noted that back-up documents had been provided regarding the alternate matrix;
- stated that the matrix provided the positives and negatives for each of the alternatives along with the strengths and weaknesses in the measurable technical areas;
- advised that the matrix was based on the purpose and need for the project, engineering requirements, and environmental considerations;
- spoke regarding the criteria that was identified in the matrix; and
- overviewed the final matrix evaluation.

Ms. Donna Robinson, HDR Alaska:

- spoke regarding the wetlands criteria on the matrix;
- advised that the wetlands data came from the National Wetlands Inventory data; and
- spoke to the three alignments that had the least impact on the wetlands.

Mr. Norm Goucher, Tryck Nyman Hayes, Inc.:

- spoke regarding issues with the soils identified in the matrix;
- stated that the assumption on the analysis is that the material would need to be taken out and replaced with gravel; and
- spoke to the comparisons of the soils on each alignment.

Mr. Perkins:

- stated that the reason that this is being done is to provide the Surface Transportation Board (STB) ten measurable areas that can be validated, which will speed along an Environmental Impact Study (EIS);
- spoke to the items that the project team could not measure in the matrix;
- advised that the STB will address air quality, safety, noise, endangered species, coastal zone operations and maintenance, public comments, and socio economics, trail crossings in the EIS;
- stated that the pluses and minuses on the matrix are regarding engineering and environmental issues; and
- apologized for not providing the Assembly with the numbers behind the matrix at an earlier date.

Mr. Brian Lindamood, Alaska Railroad:

- advised that historically speaking railroads do very well during seismic events;
- stated a fair amount of time was taken to review the faults in the alternate routes;

- stated that it has been found that railroad tracks are fairly resilient and in many cases do better than the road systems;
- spoke regarding the issues of the 1964 earthquake;
- spoke regarding the issues that can happen to railroads during large seismic activity;
- commented that based on the Railroad's criteria and the size of the event that has been predicted on the Castle Mountain Fault, all of the alternate routes would be in similar jeopardy;
- noted that bridge structures would be in the most jeopardy during a seismic event;
- stated that there was no practical way to get quantifiable information to compare the routes; and
- advised that the STB will address the seismic issues.

Assemblymember Bettine:

- spoke to survivability and safety issues; and
- queried whether tracks would cross faults.

Mr. Lindamood advised that tracks would cross faults, as well as running parallel to them.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- public concerns;
- how the routes were defined;
- issues with bridges;
- whether the STB will look at worst case scenarios;
- whether there is a preferred route;
- incorporating community plans;
- the preparation of the final document; and
- the timeline for the project.

VI. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

The following person spoke to concerns regarding the South Houston Fault and in favor of the Willow route: Mr. Greg Strong.

The following persons spoke in support of the Willow route for the rail extension: Mr. Kevin Berg, Mr. John Himmelright, Ms. Kathy Kramer, Mr. Bill O'Hara, and Mr. Ton DeLucia.

The following person spoke in support of the Mac West route: Mr. Ted Berry.

The following persons spoke to concerns regarding the matrix and that the linkage routes cover more distance than the Willow route: Mr. Patrick Sharrock.

The following person noted that public comments are not on the web and spoke to being confused to why the Willow route is not the only route being considered: Ms. Tina Dobson.

The following person spoke to concerns regarding the Willow route: Mr. Ed McCain.

The following person spoke in support of the Alaska Railroads spur to the Port and how the matrix is misleading: Mr. Doug Smole.

The following person read a letter into the record advising that the Willow Chamber of Commerce strongly supports the Willow route: Mr. Jim Huston, President of the Willow Chamber of Commerce.

The following person spoke to issues with train noise levels: Mr. Larry Jacobson.

The following person spoke in favor of the Houston route and in opposition to the Willow route: Mr. Roger Purcell.

The following person spoke against giving former Assemblymember Bill Allen the Borough Seal: Mr. John Leiner.

The following person spoke to the need for responsible development and in support of the Willow route: Mr. Doyle Holmes.

The following person spoke regarding transportation corridors: Mr. Kenneth Ray.

(The special meeting recessed at 4:44 p.m. and reconvened at 4:53 p.m.)

- B. Resolution Serial No. 07-139: A RESOLUTION IDENTIFYING ADDITIONAL SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION DURING THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD'S ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STUDY. *(Sponsor: Cindy Bettine)*
1. IM No. 07-317

MOTION: Assemblymember Bettine moved to approve Resolution Serial No. 07-139.

Mr. Duffy:

- noted that Assemblymember Kluberton's comments were included in the legislation; and
- advised that the word "agriculture" was left out of the seventh bulleted item.

MOTION: Assemblymember Woods moved a primary amendment to Resolution Serial No. 07-139, the seventh bulleted item, by inserting the word "agriculture" before the word "recreation" and inserting the words "fish and" before the word "wildlife" to read as follows: The potential affect of the rail line on agriculture, recreation, and fish and wildlife along the proposed corridors.

VOTE: The primary amendment passed without objection.

MOTION: Assemblymember Bettine moved a primary amendment to Ordinance Serial No. 07-139, the sixth bulleted item, by inserting the phrase "with special attention to residential housing, commercial development, and other economic opportunities" at the end of the sentence to read as follows: The potential effects of rail line use, along any of the proposed corridors, on future community development, with special attention to residential housing, commercial development, and other economic opportunities.

VOTE: The primary amendment passed without objection.

MOTION: Assemblymember Church moved a primary amendment to Resolution Serial No. 07-139, the third “Whereas” clause, by striking the word “numerous” and inserting in its place the word “preliminary” to read as follows: Whereas, preliminary public meetings and open houses have taken place to inform the public of the proposed rail line extension and to obtain comments.

VOTE: The primary amendment passed without objection.

MOTION: Assemblymember Church moved a primary amendment to Resolution Serial No. 07-139, the fourth “Whereas” clause, by inserting the word preliminary between the words “the” and “public” to read as follows: Whereas, the Assembly of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough has considered the preliminary public and agency comments received to date as well as the results of the preliminary engineering and environmental analysis.

Assemblymember Bettine spoke to the agency comments that had been received.

Assemblymember Church:

- advised that she supports this project; and
- spoke to the need to ensure the public that a final decision has not been made.

MOTION: Assemblymember Bettine moved a secondary amendment to Resolution Serial No. 07-139, the fourth “Whereas” clause, by striking the word “consider” and inserting in its place “had limited time to consider” to read as follows: Whereas, the Assembly of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough has had limited time to consider the preliminary public and agency comments received to date as well as the results of the preliminary engineering and environmental analysis.

VOTE: The secondary amendment passed without objection.

VOTE: The primary amendment passed as amended without objection.

Assemblymember Bettine:

- spoke to concerns that the Assembly will not have time to review documents from the Borough regarding this project;
- noted that the matrix should be put to the side; and
- spoke to the need for the Assembly Members and the public to review the future documents.

Mayor Menard queried whether there would be another opportunity for the Assembly to comment again on this project.

Mr. Duffy advised that the Assembly will have the opportunity to comment on this project again.

MOTION: Assemblymember Bettine moved a primary amendment to Resolution Serial No. 07-139, to add a “Therefore Be It Resolved” clause to read as follows: Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly believes the results of the preliminary reports and agency comments are incomplete and

should be studied and reviewed during the Surface Transportation Board (STB) process to a fuller extent.

Assemblymember Church:

- spoke to “incomplete” versus “preliminary;” and
- stated that this is preliminary.

Assemblymember Wells stated that this is in the preliminary stages.

Assemblymember Bettine spoke to the reasoning for the word “incomplete” in the amendment.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- the STB process;
- further comments that the Assembly and public can make; and
- the alternate routes on the detailed map.

VOTE: The primary amendment passed with Assemblymember Church and Kvalheim in opposition.

MOTION: Assemblymember Bettine moved a primary amendment to Resolution Serial No. 07-139, third “Whereas” clause, to insert the words “Big Lake Community Council area” after the words “Point MacKenzie” to read as follows: The potential effects of future population growth, through the year 2025, on the proposed corridors and rail use along the proposed corridors for the communities of Willow, Houston, Knik-Goose Bay, Point MacKenzie, Big Lake Community Council area, and the Borough as a whole.

VOTE: The primary amendment passed without objection.

VOTE: The main motion passed as amended without objection.

VII. MAYOR, ASSEMBLY, AND STAFF COMMENTS

Assemblymember Bettine asked the Manager to provide comments regarding the matrix.

Mr. Duffy:

- stated that he would advise not removing the matrix, as the STB has requested a preliminary review;
- noted that that information does not bind the STB, as they can look at variances in other corridors; and
- spoke to the reasons why the STB has requested the preliminary information.

Discussion ensued regarding the matrix information.

Assemblymember Bettine queried whether a motion could be made to remove the matrix from the documents.

Ms. McKechnie advised that a motion could be made to direct the Manager not to include the matrix with the documents that are sent forward to the STB.

MOTION: Assemblymember Bettine moved that the Assembly recommend to the Manager to exclude the matrix from the documents that will be forwarded to the STB.

Assemblymember Church queried whether the back-up information regarding the matrix would be provided to the STB if the matrix is not provided.

Mr. Duffy:

- stated that he strongly suggests including the matrix be included in the packet to the STB;
- advised that the STB is looking for a review of the corridors; and
- spoke to the STB process.

Assemblymember Houston spoke to removing the pluses and minuses from the matrix report.

Assemblymember Wells stated that the information in the matrix leads to the discovery process.

MOTION: Assemblymember Bettine called for the question (to stop debate).

VOTE: The motion passed without objection.

VOTE: The main motion failed with Assemblymember Bettine in favor

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The special meeting adjourned at 5:56 p.m.

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CURTIS D. MENARD, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:

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LONNIE R. McKECHNIE, Acting Borough Clerk

Minutes approved: 01/15/08