

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The special meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on March 9, 2010, at the Borough Assembly Chambers, 350 E. Dahlia Avenue, Palmer, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Mayor Talis J. Colberg for the purpose of holding a joint Assembly/School Board meeting.

**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 (*entered at 6:03 p.m.*)  
Mr. Ron Arvin, Assembly District No. 3  
Ms. Cindy L. Bettine, Assembly District No. 5  
Mr. Jim Colver, Assembly District No. 6 (*entered telephonically at 6:12 p.m.*)  
Mr. Vern Halter, Assembly District No. 7

Assembly members absent and excused:

Mr. Mark Ewing, Assembly District No. 4

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. R. Ole Larson, Seat D  
Mr. Erick Cordero, Seat E  
Ms. Colleen Vague, Seat F (*School Board President*)  
Mr. Myrl Thompson, Seat G

Borough staff in attendance were:

Mr. John Duffy, Borough Manager  
Ms. Elizabeth Gray, Assistant Borough Manger  
Mr. Nicholas Spiropoulos, Borough Attorney  
Ms. Lonnie R. McKechnie, Borough Clerk  
Ms. Brenda J. Henry, Executive Assistant to the Borough Clerk  
Ms. Shaune O'Neil, Public Works Director  
Mr. Bill Klebesadel, Project Management/Engineering Division Manager  
Mr. Bob Bechtold, Project Manager II  
Ms. Tammy Clayton, Finance Director

### **III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mayor Colberg 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 a member of the audience.

### **V. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

The following person spoke regarding the need for the Susitna Valley Junior/Senior High School track to be resurfaced: Ms. Jody Fitzgerald.

The following person spoke regarding the need for the Susitna Valley Junior/Senior High School track to be resurfaced and the possibility of teleconferencing for Assembly and School Board meetings: Ms. Tammy Hamler.

The following person spoke to concerns regarding financial literacy education: Ms. Helen Munoz.

The following person spoke to concerns regarding student-to-teacher ratios within the School District: Ms. Megan Criss.

The following person spoke regarding the need for environmental friendly infrastructure and was happy to see the LEED award for Machentanz Elementary: Mr. Mark Mastellar, State Director of Cascadia Region Green Building Council.

### **VI. ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

#### **A. Building Construction Progress *(Requested by Borough Administration)***

Ms. O'Neil provided an update regarding the following:

- Machentanz Elementary School;
- District-Wide Safety and Security Upgrades;
- Cottonwood Creek Elementary School and Wasilla High School Safety Improvements;
- Palmer High School Original Building Roof Replacement;
- New Susitna Valley Junior/Senior High School;
- Palmer High School Turf;
- Wasilla Middle School Cafeteria and Remodel;
- Houston High School Football Field Lights;
- Wasilla High School Remodel;
- Colony High School Running Track Replacement; and
- Sherrod Elementary School Playground Wind Generator.

B. Annual Budget (*pursuant to MSB 2.12.075(A)*)

Mr. John Weetman, Assistant Superintendent of Administration for the School District:

- spoke to the superintendent's review of the School District Budget;
- stated that the District reduced a director position from the budget;
- stated that the Mat-Su Correspondence Study School has a new name and is now known as Mat-Su Central School; and
- noted that the School District hopes to adopt the budget by March 17, 2010.

Assemblymember Bettine queried the amount the School District will request from the Borough for local contribution portion of the budget.

School Board Member Pougher requested that Mr. Weetman provide the figure that is required for local contributions to fund the District to \$216 Million.

Mr. Weetman stated that it would be \$52.8 Million.

C. Consolidation of Prom Night (*Requested by Assemblymember Arvin*)

Assemblymember Arvin:

- spoke to the Joint Assembly/cities of Wasilla, Houston and Palmer meeting that was recently conducted;
- stated that Mayor Rupright spoke to concerns regarding the consolidation of prom night; and
- requested that Dr. Paramo speak to the issue.

Dr. Deena Paramo, Assistant Education Improvement Supervisor:

- stated that the dates for high school proms were chosen later than usual this year;
- related that the School District is working with the local high schools to determine if consolidating graduations is feasible;
- advised that it currently costs the District approximately \$5,000 per graduation;
- noted that the schools have outgrown areas in which they are able to conduct graduations;
- stated that some of the high school graduations are currently held at the Menard Sports Complex;
- related that Mr. Lebron McPhail has been working with the high schools to coordinate and consolidate graduations, as they do in Anchorage;
- advised that consolidating graduations would provide a cost savings to the District;
- noted that the communities have indicated that they are not favorable toward consolidation of graduations;
- stated that the reason to schedule proms on the same night is not to keep students from attending multiple proms;
- noted that there are many events within the Borough that students participate in, which conflicts with prom scheduling;

- advised that Wasilla High School moved their prom to a later date in May;
- noted that there are still two large schools with prom on the same night;
- stated that the District is still pushing to hold graduations on the same day; and
- advised that the District is considering testing this with two schools this year and another two schools next year.

D. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver Award for Machetanz Elementary School *(Requested by Borough Administration)*

Mr. John Weir and Mr. Jason Gamache, with McCool, Carlson, Green presented the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver Award to the Assembly and the School Board.

E. Susitna Valley High School Research Forest *(Requested by Assemblymembers Halter and Bettine)*

Ms. Tammy Hamler, Mr. Mark Stahl, and Dr. Valarie Barber provided a presentation regarding the benefits and educational opportunities of establishing a research forest at Susitna Valley High School.

Assemblymember Woods:

- queried the status of the Rabideaux Creek Plan; and
- further asked if anything in the plan would need to change if the research forest was established.

Mr. Stahl:

- stated that Rabideaux Creek area would need to be designated by the Borough as a research forest; and
- advised that the plan does mention the Susitna Valley wood fired boiler project.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- long term sustainability of a research forest;
- costs savings to the Borough and School District by establishing the research forest;
- the amount of acreage that would be needed;
- other possible areas that might accommodate a research forest;
- the wood fired boiler providing an alternative energy source;
- educational opportunities that a research forest would provide; and
- the possibility of revenue generation as a result of a research forest.

F. Susitna Valley High School Update *(Requested by Assemblymember Halter and School District)*

Mr. Duffy:

- spoke to the memorandum he had previously provided regarding the insurance settlement;
- advised that the Borough will need to match \$1.7 million; and
- noted that the legislation will be coming before the Assembly.

School Board Member Thompson:

- noted that \$1.73 million has been provided to the School District; and
- requested a report as to where the funds have been allocated to.

Ms. Terry Irwin, Chief Financial Officer with the School District:

- stated that the \$1.73 Million from the insurance settlement was for contents;
- related that \$900,000 has been spent to date, with approximately \$467,000 remaining;
- noted that the \$437,000 has been allocated to Mr. Rob Picou, the Principal at Susitna Valley High School, who will prioritize the remaining items that need to be purchased; and
- noted that there are still a few things out for bid and for quote that should be wrapped up by June.

School Board Member Thompson queried if there is shortfall between the difference of what Mr. Picou is requesting and the available funds.

Ms. Irwin stated that there is no shortfall that she is aware of.

G. School District's Proposed Bond Projects for 2010 Regular Election *(Requested by Assemblymember Colver)*

Assemblymember Colver:

- noted that he is looking at what projects the District will request the Borough to bond for in the upcoming election; and
- stated that he would like to get an early start instead of waiting until the last minute.

Ms. George Troxel:

- stated that Ms. Catherine Esary, who is the Public Information Officer with the School District can respond to that; and
- noted that it is the same proposal that was forwarded for the October 2009 ballot.

Ms. Esary:

- spoke to the need to upgrade the fire alarm systems at 10 schools;
- stated that flooring needs to be replaced at four schools;
- noted that there are five schools that require roof replacements and/or repairs;
- stated that American Disabilities Act requires that parking be upgraded;
- spoke to track and field renovations that need to occur;
- related that the proposed bonds would be a 70/30 split, with the State reimbursing 70 percent; and
- noted that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District is the second largest in the State, with 16,600 students in 43 schools across the District.

H. Learning Data Presentation *(Requested by School District)*

Ms. Deena Paramo provided a presentation regarding Learning Data statistics for measuring performance within the School District.

*(The regular meeting recessed at 8:02 p.m. and reconvened at 8:15 p.m.)*

I. Softball and Baseball Field Update *(Requested by School District)*

Mr. Don Carney, Assistant Director of Operations and Maintenance:

- spoke to the District's attempt to generate new softball fields;
- noted that there were not adequate funds to repair all the fields that require attention;
- stated that the repair and upgrade of the Wasilla High School softball field and surrounding area has been completed;
- noted that the same thing was done at the Colony Middle School field;
- related that the Colony High School baseball field should be having new fencing installed by spring;
- stated that the Wasilla High School baseball field has not had much done to it other than the concession stand;
- noted that the Houston High School concession stand is waiting for funding;
- advised that the Colony High School baseball field is in the plan for construction; however there is no funding for it at this time; and
- spoke to additional funding needed in order to complete additional upgrades.

School Board Member Thompson:

- provided clarification that the Colony High School Baseball field is an actual field that has not yet been constructed into a baseball diamond; and
- queried the status of the softball field fencing.

Mr. Carney stated that the contractor has held off due to the recent snow fall, but is anxious to get started.

J. Creation of a Joint Borough/School District Bond Committee *(Requested by School District)*

School Board President Vague:

- stated that all of the core area high schools are over capacity;
- related that there are 2000 to 1800 students in portables, which are cold and uncomfortable;
- stated that there is also a need for a schools in the Knik-Goose Bay area;
- opined that it is time to start looking at where new schools are needed most;
- stated that this needs to become a cooperative effort;
- related that it has been stated that there is a need to form a subcommittee to figure out the best way to meet the needs of the community;
- noted that these needs will require large bonds; and
- opined that working cooperatively with the Borough is the only way to help the public understand the need for these bonds.

School Board Member Dunleavy:

- stated that boroughs and school districts often form committees in order to determine the best way to approach the bonding process; and
- noted that it was his suggestion that a committee be formed.

Assemblymember Houston:

- spoke to the Borough Area School Site Selection Committee; and
- queried if bond issues could be addressed within that committee.

School Board President Vague:

- opined that it could be possible; and
- stated that the Borough Area School Site Selection Committee was created for site selection only.

School Board Member Dunleavy stated that the Borough Area School Site Selection Committee does not deal with major construction issues.

Mayor Colberg queried if Assemblymember Houston was suggesting expanding the role of the committee to include the bond review process.

Mr. Spiropoulos:

- advised that the Borough Area School Site Selection Committee functions are laid out by code;
- stated that if the Assembly would like to give the committee the power to do that, there will need to be a code amendment; and
- noted that an alternative option might be to create an informal committee.

Mayor Colberg inquired if there were any restrictions to the Joint Assembly/School Board Committee on School Issues looking at bonding.

Mr. Spiropoulos advised that the Committee has not restrictions.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- the Joint Assembly/School Board Committee on School Issues taking on the bonding issues;
- assigning the bond review process to the proposed committee;
- the need to convey to the public the dire need of the proposed bonds;
- the possibility of bond exhaustion; and
- the need for the Borough and the School District to work together.

K. House Bill 350 (*Requested by School District*)

Superintendent Troxel:

- spoke to House Bill 350 that is before the State Legislature;
- stated that this legislation would change Alaska Statute 14.17.410(b)(2), public school funding, by reducing the four mill tax levy rate to 2.7 mills when calculating the required local effort;
- further stated that Alaska Statute 14.17.410(c), which currently provides for 50 percent of the annual increase in assessed value in a city or borough over the 1999 base year, would change so the current assessed value would be compared to the prior year's assessed value;
- spoke to concerns that the bill raises the mills that are calculated on the valuation of property in 1999;

- noted that this would increase the funding to other school districts other than the Matanuska-Susitna Borough; and
- advised that the House Committee meets on this bill again tomorrow.

School Board Member Thompson:

- stated that House Bill 350 would be moved out of committee tomorrow;
- related that there is a good chance of the bill not becoming law during this Legislative Session;
- opined that the State has concerns as it will mean an increased cost; and
- further added that the Borough should follow this bill through committee and testify against it.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- sponsors of the bill; and
- the need to make constituents aware of this issue.

L. Building Schools with Senior Citizens in Mind *(Requested by Assemblymember Bettine)*

Assemblymember Bettine:

- spoke to the article that she provided, which is entitled, “Catching the Wave: Building Schools with Senior Citizens in Mind;”
- spoke to the positive reasons to consider this type of building;
- related that she was asked by a group in her district to present this to the Assembly;
- stated that there is a large population of seniors in Big Lake;
- opined that if the Assembly starts to think differently about the way schools are constructed, a lot of problems within communities could be resolved; and
- further added that by taking a different approach, there will be more support from the voters.

Assemblymember Woods:

- opined that this approach certainly seems appropriate; and
- stated that she is in favor of the idea of building schools that have more than one purpose.

Assemblymember Houston stated that he is in favor of building schools that serve more than one purpose.

School Board Member Thompson noted that the community school concept is popular in the Talkeetna area.

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

School Board Member Dunleavy queried the date of the next Joint Assembly/School Board Committee meeting.

Mr. Duffy stated that it is scheduled for April 5, 2010.

School Board Member Larson stated that he would like to have more of a feel of whether or not the Assembly would require any additional information regarding the budget.

School Board Member Welton:

- opined that it was a good meeting;
- stated that she will be attending the United Way Substance Abuse Task Force meeting that is scheduled for tomorrow; and
- noted that she is enthusiastic for its progress.

School Board Member Pougher:

- stated that the schools are doing great things; and
- encouraged the Assembly to stop in to speak with principals and to visit the schools in their districts.

School Board President Vague:

- related that Mr. Raymond DePriest, Director of the Career and Technical Department, is being presented with a State award for leadership; and
- opined that Mr. DePriest is deserving of this award.

Mr. Spiropoulos:

- stated that at the March 16 Assembly meeting, there will be legislation regarding the Waste Water Treatment Facility for Goose Bay Correctional Center;
- stated that the facility needs to go in as soon as possible;
- further added that he was alerting the Assembly in case they had questions of him;
- provided a reminder that the Borough has an ordinance that says the Borough will not spend money for or against bond issues; and
- stated that if any of the members of the joint committee would like to review the ordinance to please let him know, as he is happy to attend a meeting to answer questions.

Mr. Duffy:

- stated that the waste water facility must be constructed prior to the arrival of migratory birds or the project will have to wait until the fall; and
- noted that he would like to schedule a work session on the gravel legislation.

Discussion ensued regarding scheduling a work session on the gravel ordinance.

*(The Assembly scheduled the work session for April 6, 2010, at 4 p.m., with representatives from small, medium and large operations from the gravel industry to provide comments on the gravel legislation.)*

Ms. McKechnie:

- related that the Platting Board would like to be included in the next Joint Assembly/Planning Commission meeting; and
- queried if the Assembly would like to do that.

Assemblymember Colver:

- opined it would be cumbersome to have three bodies in one meeting;
- further added that the Platting Board works with the Planning Commission more than the Assembly; and
- stated that those bodies should have a joint meeting if they feel it is necessary.

Mayor Colberg queried if there were any objections to discussing this issue at the next regular Assembly meeting.

There was no objection noted.

Assemblymember Halter:

- thanked Mr. Duffy for the memorandum on the Susitna Valley High School insurance settlement;
- stated that it helped to clear up misconception in the area; and
- opined that the proposed research forest is a worthy project and should be pursued.

Assemblymember Houston:

- opined that it was a good meeting;
- stated that he enjoys the working relationship with the School Board; and
- noted his excitement regarding joint ideas that were presented.

Assemblymember Arvin:

- opined that it was a productive meeting;
- noted his support of the proposed Susitna Valley High School Research Forest; and
- requested that the Manager send out a letter soon regarding the Rainbow Trout/Pike Road issue.

Assemblymember Bettine:

- related that last week she participated in a tour for Gubernatorial candidate Mr. Ralph Samuels;
- stated that most candidates do not have much knowledge regarding Borough projects;
- further added that Mr. Samuels was impressed by the tour;
- noted that part of the tour was at the career and technical school and Mr. Samuels was interested in how our schools could be used as models for other districts;
- noted that the next Borough Area School Site Selection Committee meeting is scheduled for April 11, 2010, at 4:30 p.m.;
- related that the committee is gearing up to look for land in the Knik-Goose Bay area;
- stated that she would like to hear input from the School District regarding the research forest; and
- opined it is important to receive their comments prior to land being set aside ; and
- noted her support of the proposed research forest.

Assemblymember Woods:

- thanked the bodies for their participation;
- stated that she liked the information and subject matter;
- related that she is unsure of what would need to be done to move forward with the wood fired boiler; and
- opined that if coupled with the research forest, the project would be more grant worthy.

## IX. ADJOURNMENT

The special meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

ATTEST:

  
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TALIS J. COLBERG, Borough Mayor

  
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LONNIE R. McKECHNIE, CMC, Borough Clerk

Minutes approved: 04/06/10