

I. CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on June 12, 2001 at the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly Chambers, Palmer, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Mayor Timothy L. Anderson. The purpose of the special meeting was a joint assembly/school board meeting.

II. ROLL CALL

Assembly members present and establishing a quorum were:

Mr. Larry DeVilbiss, Assembly District No. 1
Ms. Sara Jansen, Assembly District No. 2 (Deputy Mayor)
Mr. Talis J. Colberg, Assembly District No. 3
Mr. Dan Kelly, Assembly District no. 4
Ms. Jody Simpson, Assembly District No. 5
Mr. Jim Colver, Assembly District No. 6
Ms. Kelly Lankford Ladere, Assembly District No. 7

School Board members present and establishing a quorum were:

Mr. Rob Wells, Seat A (arriving at 6:12 p.m.)
Mr. Carl Gatto, Seat B
Ms. Linda Menard, Seat C
Mr. Bob Johnson, Seat D, Chair
Mr. Mike Chmielewski, Seat E
Ms. Helene Brooks, Seat F
Mr. Daniel Contini, Seat G

Borough staff participating:

Ms. Sandra Dillon, Borough Clerk
Mr. John Duffy, Borough Manager
Mr. Michael Gatti, Borough Attorney
Ms. Elizabeth Manfred, Deputy Borough Clerk
Ms. Tammy Clayton, Finance Director

School staff participating:

Ms. Patricia Chesbro, Superintendent
Mr. Mike Schwald, Director of Transportation

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was led by Eowyn LeMay Ivey, Frontiersman Reporter.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review School Capital Construction Plan (MSB 2.12.075)

Mr. Jim Swing, Director of Public Works, reported on the status of current projects:

- *Meadow Lakes Elementary School* - final completion achieved in April; final contract costs were \$8,260,000; total project costs were \$10,100,000; came in a little over \$1 million less than budget;
- *Ron Larson Elementary School* - 99 percent complete; substantial completion achieved in February 2001, six months ahead of contractual time; landscaping is all that remains; total costs were \$9,291,000, about \$1.5 million less than budget;
- *Houston High School* - site package was done last fall; Wolverine Supply Co. was the successful bidder for the contract amount of \$14,347,000; they are in process of mobilizing on the site and work is scheduled to begin soon; construction is to be completed by August 2002;
- *Teeland Middle School* - project is 90 percent complete; expect to turn over classrooms to the district by mid-July; project currently is approximately \$2 million under budget;
- *Burchell High School* - Collins Construction was the successful bidder at \$2.3 million; expect a notice to proceed to issue this week; work on the addition will commence next week and is scheduled for completion in the spring 2002;
- *Sherrod Elementary School* - replacement school is still in site-selection mode; and
- *Wasilla High School* - the re-roofing began this week; \$595,000 for the school, \$150,000 for the pool room; should be completed in September; the design development report will be before the school board tomorrow and before the assembly next week.

Assemblymember Colver:

- inquired about the status of the turn lane off Seldon Road to Teeland School;
- expressed safety concerns about fast-moving traffic on Seldon;
- encouraged the savings afforded when the school district and the borough work together at shared facilities; and
- referenced the joint management agreement encouraging its approval; that sharing facilities would make better use of the tax dollar.

School Board Member Menard:

- discussed traffic patterns of schools and noted that Meadow Lakes has an excellent traffic pattern that should be used as a model for other schools to follow.

Brief discussion continued concerning school traffic patterns.

B. Participation in PERS (Requested by Assemblymember DeVilbiss)

Assemblymember DeVilbiss:

- requested a report on PERS contributions, asking if the figure is the same each year and whether it is what was anticipated.

Ms. Clayton:

- responded that a letter is received annually from the state that sets forth the PERS rate, giving an estimate for the following year which is utilized for budgeting purposes;
- stated that the rate received about two weeks ago is the same as the one projected a year ago, and the new rate projected for PERS is 7.85 percent, effective July 1, for both the borough and the school district; and
- noted that payments are accrued with each paycheck and submitted to the state monthly.

Mr. Dave Moore, of Architects Alaska, gave a presentation on the Wasilla High School construction project:

- advised they have completed the site development package for the high school, including the construction cost estimate;
- noted that some of the options included in the original design package had to be cut in order to meet budget;
- reviewed and discussed the items included in the project:
 - remodel of the administration area;
 - remodel of the special programs area;
 - relocation of the concessions and student store room from the home economics area;
 - remodel and expansion of the kitchen;
 - ADA upgrades throughout the building;
 - minor remodeling in the locker room;
 - upgrades to heating and ventilating equipment;
 - building code upgrades, including addition of a sprinkler system;
 - mechanical and electrical upgrades;
 - minor structural upgrades;
- reviewed and discussed the items cut from the project:
 - exterior painting has been eliminated; will only paint those interior areas where they are doing other work;
 - no new lab counter tops;
 - no new vinyl tile in the east corridor;
 - no exterior window upgrades;
 - no upgrades to exhaust system in the auto shop;
 - no new seating in the theater;
 - no emergency eyewash showers in the science lab.
- spoke briefly to the budget for the entire remodeling project, including the phase I work to occur this summer, which is \$7.8 million; bid for the roofing was received at the contract amount of approximately \$600,000, leaving about \$7.2 million for the phase II work;
- noted they have identified eight bid alternates in case the bids received do not line up with their estimates, but are hopeful this will not happen.

Questions and discussion followed concerning:

- the poor condition of some of the exterior windows; that much of the problem is the gaskets;
- the cost of exterior painting, approximately \$100,000; life of paint job probably 7-10 years;
- remodel construction on the high school to start in July 2002;
- what it would take to reallocate money to Wasilla High School from other projects that have

- come in under budget.
- the fact that the eyewash station and vehicle exhaust system are safety issues and whether there would be a code violation compliance issue with OSHA standards if these items were not included in the project;
- the procedure for reallocating monies from one school project to another;
- the time line for pursuing a reallocation action; and
- whether the Department of Education is generally in favor of reallocation of monies.

Assemblymember Colver and School Board Member Wells:

- encouraged beginning the process now to reallocate money from Meadow Lakes to Wasilla High School.

School Board Member Wells:

- spoke to the possibility of a deferred maintenance statewide bond in the legislature next year.

C. Budget Briefing by the School District: Use of New Funds (Requested by Mayor Anderson)

Ms. Chesbro reported that:

- the board's priority is teachers, instruction supplies, and specific student programs;
- instruction supplies were increased by \$50 per student throughout the district;
- textbook funding for new schools was doubled;
- sports and ice time for hockey was restored;
- provision for providing additional staffing at the high school level plus an additional position for district-wide programs that have been successful;
- they are considering starting a human services career strand and a strand having to do with power recreation such as sports; and
- additional teacher positions in the fall are anticipated for unexpected bumps in enrollment.

Assemblymember Ladere complimented the school district on its choices for the new funds.

School Board Chair Johnson reported that:

- the school board listened to what the assembly had to say, which helped in making some of the decisions that were made;
- not all the decisions were unanimous and there was impact to classified people throughout the district; and
- indicated that a lot of things that went forth to go to the classroom actually came from the classified's pocket – their salaries, their jobs.

D. Continued Discussion of Lapsing Funds (Requested by Mayor Anderson)

Mayor Anderson introduced the item and opened it up for discussion.

Ms. Chesbro:

- responded that she really doesn't have an answer; that the last she heard they were within \$20 million of the \$1.3 million RIP payment; that they anticipate some additional, but she doesn't

have knowledge at this point of what that would be.

Mayor Anderson initiated discussion on the possibility of modifying the current code that requires the lapsed funds to come back.

School Board Member Brooks:

- encouraged the assembly to consider changing the code to allow the school district to keep the lapsed funds, which would avoid having to spend the last several months of the year in a guessing game of whether it should be spent;
- opined that the current law encourages something other than the responsible decision making that the school board would like to make; and
- supported summer school instituted on a regular basis.

Discussion continued concerning the issue of lapsed funds.

Mayor Anderson:

- commented that since the borough funded to the cap this year for the first time that we need to wait and see what happens, stating for example that if the school district lapsed \$1 million next year from its budget that to some degree it might send a message that the full amount of money was not needed; and
- stated he still supports renegotiating the number, but supports waiting to see how this year works out first.

E. School Administration Building (Requested by School Board President Johnson)

School Board Chair Johnson:

- pointed out that the school district central office is not ADA compliant and could be closed down because of code violations; and
- remarked that he had hoped the Sherrod replacement would move along faster, suggesting that it could be used as an administration building.

Discussion followed concerning:

- the potential liability of the current building;
- the costs of upgrading the current building versus changing Sherrod to an administration building; that cost estimates for both should be obtained in order to make an appropriate comparison;
- crisis management and an emergency plan in the event the building was locked up tomorrow; and
- long-range planning; that it is critical to have a plan be in place not only for the upgrade of the administration building but for all school buildings.

F. FY 2003 Budget Preparation Process (Requested by School Board President Johnson)

School Board Chair Johnson:

- stressed support for forward funding to avoid last minute budgeting; and

- inquired what the assembly and the school board could do to make the process better for next year.

Comments and suggestions included:

- having a two-year budget process; and
- institute a budget advisory committee in the budgeting process.

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

School Board Member Gatto:

- commented on the graduation ceremonies of Colony Middle and Colony High Schools, stating that he was more than impressed with student achievements, noting in particular two students being accepted to West Point; and
- noted that so often we only hear about the bad things happening in our schools and don't hear about all the great things that are going on until graduation day; that after listening to the school bands, the speakers, and the achievements he feels proud that good things are happening in our community.

School Board Member Contini:

- commented on the graduation ceremonies and stated his pride in the students' accomplishments; and
- voiced his surprise that the sales tax issue was not discussed tonight.

School Board Member Wells:

- stated that the joint committee on school issues discussed the sales tax proposal; and
- commended the assembly for putting the issue back before the public, noting the public hearing scheduled for next week which he plans to attend and provide his support.

School Board Member Chmielewski:

- commented on his observations at the graduation ceremonies and spoke to the diversity of process in the various schools.

School Board Member Menard:

- spoke in support of the proposed multi-sports facility, stating that the valley needs to accommodate the number of people who attend graduation ceremonies and for the growth that the valley is facing;
- relayed her thoughts on a sad note concerning the school bus accident and death of a student, noting the large number of people who attended the funeral lending support for the little girl's family; and
- expressed that her appreciation for the positive meeting.

School Board Member Brooks:

- congratulated fellow board member Carl Gatto on winning the triathlon;
- stated that we all should get into the habit of sharing personal successes in order to provide others with inspiration;

- expressed disappointed that the agenda tonight did not provide an opportunity to discuss the sales tax issue, that she also supports the proposal;
- commented on the graduations, reflecting the unique nature of each school community, noting particularly that there were three valedictorians at Wasilla High because there were three young people who had gotten straight As for all four years;
- supported the multi-sports complex;
- expressed appreciation for the meeting tonight; and
- after being encouraged to do so, spoke of her personal accomplishment of having received a gold medal in tai kwan do.

School Board Chair Johnson:

- also supports the proposal for a multi-sports complex, stating there needs to be a facility in the valley for graduations and other activities;
- remarked on the alternative avenues to graduation such as through Burchell, correspondence, and Valley Pathways; and
- thanked the assembly for its support and work on the budget.

Ms. Chesbro:

- talked about BP's Teachers of Excellence program, stating she recently attended a dinner at which teachers from the valley being honored were: Carol Abbott, who teaches the emotionally-disturbed at Wasilla Middle School; Suzanne Sear, long-time math teacher at Wasilla Middle School and who will be the principal of Snowshoe Elementary next year; Patty Quinn, long-time kindergarten teacher at Tanaina Elementary School; Bob Williams, math teacher at Palmer High School; and Carla Tocsta, who teaches Japanese and English at Wasilla High School. Carla Tocsta was named BP Teacher of the Year.
- noted that these people were her students; that she finds it energizing that they are coming back to our school district and contributing to the greater good, that they have become model citizens and model teachers.

Ms. Dillon:

- reported that the redistricting map should be available for viewing tomorrow, and to expect it on the Internet by the first of next week;
- handed out the first of the literature for the election season, noting that the brochure has specified the dates for candidate filings, etc.;
- noted in particular that new this year there will be early voting at the Cottonwood Mall and the Borough Building; that the difference between this and absentee voting is convenience to the voters in not having to fill out as many forms as for an absentee ballot; and
- emphasized that early voting is a trial run and hopeful that the public will take advantage of the opportunity and the extended hours of operation.

Mr. Duffy:

- presented a memo providing additional information on revenue and expenditure projections and explained the numbers to the assembly; and
- stated that he appreciated tonight's joint meeting.

Assemblymember Simpson:

- commented on the meeting that she and the manager had this afternoon with the commissioner of the Department of Community and Economic Development, stating that Ms. Sedgwick was glad to hear our enthusiastic comments that the valley has a good school system; and
- expressed her appreciation for tonight's meeting.

Assemblymember Lankford Ladere:

- stated her pleasure to be associated with the members of the school board and the assembly; and
- voiced her support for following the money closely, supported the reallocation of funds to Wasilla High School, if possible, and emphasized funding safety upgrades.

Assemblymember Colberg:

- expressed his appreciation for the joint meeting.

Assemblymember DeVilbiss:

- encouraged support or participation in the Valley Hospital run;
- commented on the scheduling of graduations, that he would appreciate the board being sensitive to graduations being held on Tuesday nights so as not to conflict with assembly meetings; and
- expressed thanks to whomever was responsible for getting Glacier View's parking lot and driveway on the capital projects list.

Assemblymember Kelly:

- appreciated the meeting and hearing school board comments;
- spoke to more needs than funds will allow;
- noted that he has received many comments of support and offers to help get the sales tax passed and appreciates the school board members' support on the matter;
- supports looking further into having the budget process every two years;
- expressed his desire that all assembly members receive invitations to all graduations regardless of the district; and
- spoke to the methamphetamine problem in our valley.

Assemblymember Colver:

- expressed appreciation for the working relationship with the school board;
- conveyed some of his constituents' thoughts on the timing of summer school, stating that some of the public would prefer to have summer school in August just prior to the beginning of the school year rather than right after a school year ends; and
- requested an update on the Charter School.

Mr. Duffy responded that there are sufficient funds to do it and that it's on track.

Assemblymember Jansen:

- asked for the school start date when set;

- apologized that the sales tax issue wasn't on the agenda tonight, that she hadn't asked for it soon enough;
- expressed support for the sales tax and stated we should be mindful of creating a community task force or separate group aside from governmental agencies;
- thanked the school board for truly listening to what was said at the budget public hearings;
- was very impressed with all the accolades and awards that the staff has received, that the awards reflect positively of the administration and the school board;
- voiced support for the sports complex;
- expressed appreciation for the support she received through her difficult time this year; and
- applauded full funding for the schools and thanked everyone who played a part in it.

Mayor Anderson:

- expressed his observations on the graduations that he attended – Su Valley, Burchell, and Wasilla; that they were three very different ceremonies and he thoroughly enjoyed all three; that the one thing he noted in common was that there was standing room only;
- thanked the school board for going through the budget process;
- spoke to the sales tax public hearing scheduled for June 19th; that he appreciates the school board's support;
- congratulated Mr. Gatto and Ms. Brooks for their awards; and
- thanked everyone for another good meeting.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The special meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.



TIMOTHY L. ANDERSON, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:



SANDRA A. DILLON, Borough Clerk

Minutes approved: July 17, 2001