

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The special meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on March 13, 2007, at the Borough Assembly Chambers, 350 E. Dahlia Avenue, Palmer, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Deputy Mayor Lynne Woods 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. Bill Allen, Assembly District No. 2  
Mr. Robert Wells, Assembly District No. 6  
Mr. Tom Kluberton, Assembly District No. 7

Assembly members absent and excused were:

Ms. Michelle R. Church, Assembly District No. 3  
Ms. Mary Kvalheim, Assembly District No. 4  
Ms. Cindy Bettine, Assembly District No. 5

School Board members present and establishing a quorum were:

Mr. Jim Colver, Seat A  
Ms. Sarah Welton, Seat B  
Ms. Patricia Purcell, Seat D  
Mr. Larry DeVilbiss, Seat F (*School Board President*)  
Mr. Daniel Contini, Seat G

School Board members absent and excused were:

Ms. Linda Menard, Seat C  
Ms. Cheryl Turner, Seat E

Borough staff in attendance were:

Ms. Michelle M. McGehee, CMC, Borough Clerk  
Ms. Tammy Clayton, Acting Borough Manager  
Mr. Ron Swanson, Community Development Director  
Mr. Nicholas Spiropoulos, Borough Attorney  
Ms. Lonnie R. McKechnie, Deputy Borough Clerk  
Mr. Keith Rountree, Public Works Director

School Board staff in attendance were:

Mr. George Troxel, Assistant Superintendent of Education  
Mr. Scott Schwald, Director of Maintenance

Mr. Jack Sherman, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Risk Management  
Ms. Susan McCauley, Director of Education

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

Deputy Mayor Woods inquired if there were any changes to the agenda.

School Board Member Colver requested that items C and item F be combined into one discussion.

There were no objections noted.

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

### **IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Assemblymember Allen.

### **V. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

The following person spoke regarding renovating the old Central Kitchen at Iditarod Elementary School to make more classroom space: Ms. Bernadette Rupright, Iditarod Elementary Parent/Teacher Association.

### **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A. Annual Budget (*pursuant to code*)**

Mr. Troxel:

- advised that the School Board has approved the fiscal year 2008 budget;
- spoke regarding the requested appropriations;
- advised that there were five committees that helped in the preparation of the School District's budget; and
- spoke regarding programmed-based budgeting.

Assemblymember Allen queried whether there would be a work session regarding the School District's budget.

Mr. Sherman advised that the School District's budget will be provided to the Borough next week.

Deputy Mayor Woods advised that the School District's budget presentation to the Assembly is scheduled for April 24, 2007.

B. Discussion re: Using Leftover Bond Funds for the Nutrition Services Center to Renovate the Old Central Kitchen into Usable Classroom Space *(requested by: the School Board)*

Mr. Troxel:

- advised that there have been requests to renovate the old Central Kitchen at Iditarod Elementary;
- stated that the school is over capacity and needs more classroom space;
- spoke regarding the affect that aging and the configuration has had on Iditarod Elementary School; and
- opined that it would be a good idea to go to bond to renovate the elementary school.

Assemblymember Allen queried the age of school.

Mr. Schwald advised that the school was constructed in the late seventies.

Assemblymember Allen queried if there has been an engineer's report done in the last two years.

Mr. Schwald advised that there has not been an engineers report done in the last two years.

Assemblymember Allen:

- spoke to the need for an engineers report; and
- stated that an engineers report should be done when a school is being looked at for remodeling.

School Board Member Colver:

- spoke to the issues with the configuration of the school;
- stated that the gym teacher is using a closet for his office, which is unsafe; and
- opined that left over bond funds could be used to renovate the old Central Kitchen.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- funding that may be available to remodel the old Central Kitchen;
- the need for the State to approve the funds being moved from one project to another;
- the funds that may be available at the end of the Nutrition Service Center project;
- performing a structural analysis to the elementary school;
- the possibilities of bonding for a new elementary school; and
- the issues with the current school space.

*(Items C and F were combined at agenda setting.)*

C. Proposal to Use 50/50 Lapsed Funding for School Site Acquisition *(requested by: the School Board)*

F. Proposed School Site Acquisition Reserve *(requested by: Assemblymember Kvalheim)*

Mr. Troxel:

- noted that the School Board funds that lapse back to the Borough could be used for school site acquisition; and

- stated that there is not a significant amount of the funds that have lapsed back to the Borough in the last year.

Ms. Clayton:

- advised that the Joint Assembly/School Board Committee on School Issues has proposed that the School District funds that lapse back to Borough at the end of the fiscal year be put into a reserve for future school site acquisition; and
- advised that code would need to be changed for this to move forward.

School Board Member Colver:

- advised that the Borough Area School Site Selection Committee originally spoke to this option; and
- noted that they brought up this proposal as a way to have funds available for school sites.

Assemblymember Woods queried if the School Board has approved the creation of a reserve.

School Board President DeVilbiss advised that the School Board has not spoken to this issue yet.

Ms. Clayton advised that Assemblymember Kvalheim requested that she prepare a code change to set-up a reserve for the lapsed funds.

D. Construction Report *(requested by: the Joint Assembly/School Board Committee on School Issues)*

Mr. Rountree provided an update on the following projects: Palmer High School Renovations; Shaw Elementary School; Knik Goose Bay Elementary School; Susitna Valley High School Renovations; Career Center; Nutrition Services Facility; Wasilla High School Renovations Phase III; Wasilla Middle School Cafeteria Renovation and Addition; and South Palmer Elementary School.

School Board President DeVilbiss queried whether Mr. Rountree wanted the School Board to act this evening to authorize administration to move forward with creating a committee to review the design proposals for the South Palmer Elementary School.

Mr. Rountree:

- advised that he would like the School Board to authorize administration to move forward with creating a committee;
- opined that credibility is being lost with the construction and design firms, due to the fact that this project has not been moved on as of yet; and
- stated that he would like to move forward with the project.

Assemblymember Allen queried if it is a concern regarding the qualifications of the committee members who will be evaluating the criteria for the engineering and design.

Mr. Rountree:

- recommended that the School District's representatives could come from their maintenance division, rather than School Board members;
- spoke regarding how the firms would be evaluated;
- stated that technical ability is not needed to evaluate the criteria; and
- noted that he is recommending that Borough staff be part of the committee.

Mr. Troxel suggested expanding the committee to principals and not just maintenance;

Discussion ensued regarding:

- how the firms would be evaluated;
- the possibility of protests being filed after the bid is awarded;
- the make-up of the committee;
- past practice of awarding bids;
- the need to look at the qualification of a firm to design a new school prototype; and
- scheduling the topic of forming a committee to discuss the design proposals for the South Palmer Elementary School for a School Board agenda.

E. Palmer School Site Selection Update (*requested by: the Joint Assembly/School Board Committee on School Issues*)

School Board President DeVilbiss:

- advised that there was a motion at a School Board meeting to rescind the action that was taken approving the school site;
- advised that the School Board has decided that all of the proposed sites need to be reviewed again; and
- advised that a letter was written explaining the School Board's concerns to the Assembly regarding the Nelson Road site.

School Board Member Welton advised that a new packet regarding the Nelson Road school site was received; however, they have not received the answers to their questions.

School Board Member Purcell:

- advised that the majority of the Borough Area School Site Selection Committee are still in favor of the Nelson Road site; and
- advised that the Committee had requested that Mr. Rountree provide a presentation to the School Board regarding the progress of the road.

Mr. Rountree spoke regarding a March 9, 2007, letter from the Borough to the School District that addressed that road and utility issues.

Mr. Troxel:

- stated that ultimately the school site is the Assembly's decision;
- spoke regarding the School Board's concerns regarding the Nelson Road site; and
- advised that the Borough Manager stated that the concerns have been addressed, which have been explained in the March 9, 2007, letter to the School District.

G. Alternative Funding Sources *(requested by: Assemblymember Kvalheim)*

Ms. Clayton advised that Assemblymember Kvalheim has asked if it is legal to tax plastic bags as an alternative funding source.

Mr. Spiropoulos:

- advised that he is still researching whether it is legal to tax plastic bags; however, any other tax that is being imposed would need to go to the voters; and
- spoke regarding equal protection claims.

School Board Member Welton:

- advised that there has been a move in several cities and in Ireland for taxing plastic bags;
- noted that taxing plastic bags cleans up the landscape; and
- stated that it makes people think about whether to use plastic or not.

Assemblymember Allen:

- stated that taxpayers will not approve taxing gravel; and
- noted that it may be difficult to get them to approve taxing plastic bags.

School Board Member Welton spoke regarding the plastic bags that were hanging in the trees after the wind storm.

*(The special meeting recessed at 7:30 p.m. and reconvened at 7:40 p.m.)*

H. Curriculum Audit *(requested by: Assemblymember Church)*

Ms. Susan McCauley:

- noted that in 2002, the first Curriculum Management Audit was performed;
- advised that the 2002 audit suggested 9 recommendations to the School District; and
- provided a presentation of the results of the January 2007 Curriculum Management Audit.

**VII. SCHOOL BOARD, MAYOR, ASSEMBLY, AND STAFF COMMENTS**

Mr. Spiropoulos advised that the Borough has won the Krause case at the appellate level of the Superior Court.

School Board Member Contini:

- spoke regarding the March 9, 2007, letter from the Borough regarding the Palmer Area School Site Selection; and
- stated that there always seems to be a construction report full of overspending.

School Board Member Colver:

- spoke regarding issues with the Palmer area school site;
- stated that there needs to be a solution for the Iditarod Elementary School issue;
- spoke regarding AS14.14.060, stating that the School Board is responsible for design criteria for school buildings subject to the approval of the Assembly; and
- spoke regarding the need for the Assembly and School Board to work collaboratively on design criteria for schools.

Assemblymember Kluberton:

- spoke regarding the decision process for the Palmer area school site selection;
- spoke in favor of forming a committee and to provide them with clear objectives so that they are able to provide clear information to the Assembly and School Board; and
- stated that based on the information that has been provided, there is not a way to make good quality decisions.

School Board President DeVilbiss stated that he looks forward to working with Assembly on the budget process.

Mr. Troxel:

- spoke regarding the curriculum audit; and
- stated that a guaranteed viable curriculum is important to the School District and the students.

Assemblymember Allen:

- congratulated Mr. Troxel for his appointment to Chief School Administrator;
- spoke regarding the issues with the South Palmer Elementary site selection; and
- opined that the site selection process was flawed.

Deputy Mayor Woods:

- advised that there is an updated document due to the last site selection process;
- spoke to the need to review and reevaluate the site selection process; and
- stated that she appreciated the Curriculum Management Audit report.

Assemblymember Allen:

- advised that the Assembly is in the process of looking for new space that would include a new Assembly Chambers;
- stated that it would be worthy of consideration to have a chamber that could be used by the city of Palmer, the School Board, and the Assembly; and
- requested that the School Board discuss this issue.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The special meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

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CURTIS D. MENARD, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:

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MICHELLE M. MCGEHEE, CMC, Borough Clerk

Minutes approved: 04/05/07