

I. CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on October 25, 2005, at the Borough Assembly Chambers, 350 E. Dahlia Avenue, Palmer, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Mayor Timothy L. Anderson for the purpose of holding a joint Assembly/Planning Commission meeting.

II. ROLL CALL

Assembly members present and establishing a quorum were:

Ms. Lynne Woods, Assembly District No. 1
Mr. Talis J. Colberg, Assembly District No. 3
Ms. Mary Kvalheim, Assembly District No. 4
Ms. Cindy Bettine, Assembly District No. 5
Ms. Betty Vehrs, Assembly District No. 7

Assembly members absent and excused were:

Mr. Bill Allen, Assembly District No. 2
Mr. Jim Colver, Assembly District No. 6 (*Deputy Mayor*)

Planning Commission members present and establishing a quorum were:

Ms. Bridgette Lively, District No. 1
Ms. Helga Larson, District No. 2
Mr. Mark Masteller, District No. 3 (*Chair*)
Ms. Faye I. Palin, District No. 4
Mr. David Webster, District No. 5
Mr. Curtis Menard, District No. 6
Ms. Rose M. Jenne, District No. 7

Staff in attendance were:

Ms. Michelle M. McGehee, CMC, Borough Clerk
Mr. John Duffy, Borough Manager
Ms. Teresa Williams, Borough Attorney
Ms. Lonnie R. McKechnie, Executive Assistant to the Borough Clerk
Mr. Murph O'Brien, Planning and Land Use Director
Mr. Sev Jones, Planning Division Chief
Ms. Susan Lee, Planner I
Ms. Eileen Probasco, Planner, Planner II
Ms. Bea Adler, Emergency Management Program Coordinator

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Anderson 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. Michelle Church, Platting Board Member.

V. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

(There was no one present who wished to testify.)

VI. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- A. Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU), Federal Highway Legislation *(Requested by: Planning Administration)*

Mr. Ottesen, Chief of Planning for the Alaska State Department of Transportation:

- spoke regarding the Alaska public road miles;
- advised that 75 percent of travel is occurring in the top 30 percent of the State's road miles;
- spoke regarding the traffic accident percentages in the Borough;
- advised that the Borough leads the State in major injuries and fatal accidents on a per capita basis;
- advised that 55,000-57,000 vehicles a day travel on the Glenn Highway to Anchorage;
- advised that \$60 million in federal funds are being used for major maintenance and operations on State highways; and
- spoke regarding federal environmental requirements affecting transportation.

Commission Masteller queried restrictions on using federal funds on operations and maintenance.

Mr. Ottesen:

- advised that the funds have to be used on major maintenance;
- advised that all roads, ports, shipyards, rail, ferries and parking garages are eligible;
- advised that without reallocation of new funding, the main arteries of commerce and communications will not sustain the state in the future;
- spoke regarding the funding differences in TEA-21 which funded 1998-2004 and SAFETEA-LU which funds 2005-2009 transportation project;
- spoke to the differences in earmarks and formula monies;
- spoke regarding highway funding that have been authorized;
- advised in 2008, the spending ability will be the same as it was in 1998;
- spoke regarding inflexible core funds;

- spoke regarding the funding sources of the State's four priority earmarks for the Knik Arm Bridge, Gravina Island Bridge, Juneau Access, and Bradfield Access; and
- stated that earmarks are often under funded and a source of the additional funds need to be determined.

Mr. Duffy queried the rules regarding starting a project and not completing that project.

Mr. Ottesen:

- advised that the federal funds have to be paid back if a project is not completed within 10 years;
- spoke to funds per capita statewide;
- spoke regarding the authorization of funds and the appropriation of funds;
- stated that historically there is a 12 percent difference between funds that are appropriated and funds that are authorized;
- spoke regarding the State Transportation Improvement Program funding levels;
- spoke to the reasons that the Alaska State Department of Transportation believes that the earmarks are deductive;
- advised that a new funding program has passed for the Denali Commission to oversee transportation funding; and
- spoke regarding the decrease in the discretionary funds for the State Transportation Improvement Plan.

Commissioner Larson queried how it is determined if a highway is a federal, state, or local highway.

Mr. Ottesen:

- advised that all the highways in the State are either local or State highways, unless the highway is located on a military reservation or national forest;
- advised that a federal aide highway is eligible for federal funds; and
- spoke regarding federal aide highways.

Mayor Anderson queried what effect all this has on the Borough's allocation in dollars.

Mr. Ottesen:

- noted that the Borough is competing with other projects statewide; and
- advised that there are projects that will be started that have to wait for funding.

Assemblymember Vehrs queried the Parks Highway upgrade to mile 49.

Mr. Ottesen advised that they have upgraded the Parks Highway to mile 44.

Assemblymember Colberg queried if the Borough would get more money if the Knik Arm Bridge was not built.

Mr. Ottesen:

- advised that Congress appropriated the funds for the Knik Arm Bridge project; and
- stated that unless the money is reappropriated somewhere else the funds will sit there.

Assemblymember Bettine queried the fatality rate per capita in the equation of priorities.

Mr. Ottesen:

- advised that safety data is reviewed;
- advised that there are no hot spots for accidents on the National Highway Systems;
- stated that high speed accidents are more randomly located and in the urban areas they happen in clusters; and
- commented that it is harder to direct safety funds when there are problems everywhere.

Discussion ensued regarding highway safety concerns.

Mayor Anderson queried how much influence the Borough can have regarding the priority list.

Mr. Ottesen:

- advised there is a 45-day comment period; and
- advised that he had requested that the regions provide their top priorities.

Assemblymember Bettine queried the Borough's process for setting priorities.

Mr. O'Brien:

- advised that projects are identified and scored;
- stated that there has been a backlog in projects and there have been no new nominated projects for awhile;
- advised that there is always an opportunity to nominate new projects; and
- spoke to the criteria that is used for ranking.

Discussion ensued regarding prioritization of projects.

(The special meeting recessed at 6:57 p.m. and reconvened at 7:10 p.m.)

B. Coastal Management Plan Amendment Update *(Requested by: Planning Administration)*

Elizabeth Benson, Bristol Environmental:

- advised that the Borough joined the Alaska Coastal Management Program in 1984;
- advised that the State Legislature in 2003 passed House Bill 191, which amended the plan;
- noted that the Borough's Coastal Management Plan no longer conforms to the State's requirements;
- advised that the Point MacKenzie Area Meriting Special Attention Plan was adopted in 1993; and

- advised that the Borough can only adopt policies for coastal development and coastal access if the area is considered marine coastal water.

Mr. Duffy queried if there was a zone for coastal salt water.

Ms. Benson:

- advised that it is measured by how salty the water is;
- noted that policies can only be written for those areas that are considered salt water;
- advised that rivers, streams, and lakes are no longer allowed to be considered part of the coastal management program; and
- spoke regarding how the State will allow for the areas adjacent to rivers, lakes, and streams to be designated.

Assemblymember Vehrs requested that an example be given of what the Borough used to be allowed to do but is no longer allowed.

Ms. Benson:

- stated that the Borough could have a say in what occurred in the area located next to a stream; however, with the changes, the Borough would no longer have a say over what occurred in the area; and
- noted that the Borough will no longer be part of the permit process with the State.

Assemblymember Vehrs queried how this would affect the Borough's ability to regulate.

Ms. Benson advised that this will not affect the Borough's ability to regulate outside of the cities

Mr. O'Brien clarified that this will affect the Borough's ability to be aware that something is occurring in an area.

Discussion ensued regarding the effects on Borough policies and regulations.

Ms. Benson:

- spoke regarding allowable designations in riparian areas;
- stated that the suitable designations for the Borough is to use the existing coastal zone boundaries;
- advised that the coastal zone is proposed to be designated as a recreation and tourism use area, excluding Point MacKenzie; and
- stated that Point MacKenzie is being proposed as a major energy use area.

Assemblymember Bettine queried the decision that recreation and tourism are the only suitable designations for the Borough.

Mr. O'Brien:

- advised that recreation and tourism is important throughout the coastal zone;
- noted that this does not mean that these are the only activities that can occur in those zones; and
- stated that this gives the Borough a seat at the table to review the projects.

Ms. Benson noted that there is no guarantee that the State will accept the suggested designations.

Commission Lively queried the natural hazard designation.

Ms. Benson:

- advised that State standards for natural hazard designations could not be applied, as every natural hazard would need to be mapped and justified;
- spoke regarding protecting the resources and not the activities in the area;
- advised that mapping out the Borough coastal zone would take 2-3 years; and
- noted that the State allowed an extension for the due date for the Coastal Management Plan from July 2005 to March 2006.

Mr. O'Brien:

- spoke to the need of having a flexible designation plan; and
- stated that recreation and tourism designations gives the Borough a broad scope.

Ms. Benson advised that there are 4,000 square miles inside the existing coastal zone; however, they are not considered coastal waters.

Ms. Williams queried if there were conflicts with the state and federal regulations.

Mr. O'Brien:

- advised that there are conflicts with the state and federal regulations; and
- stated that the State rules have continuously changed throughout the process.

Ms. Benson:

- spoke regarding the benefits of the designations;
- advised of the uses that will still be allowed in the designations;
- stated that a project requires a state or federal permit to come in on the coastal zone program; and
- spoke regarding the deadlines for submitting the Borough's Coastal Zone Management Plan.

Commissioner Masteller queried how the State will react to a recreation and tourism designation for an entire coastal zone area.

Ms. Benson:

- spoke to a draft of the plan that was given to the State in May;
- advised that they are attempting to organize the plan in a better format; and
- spoke regarding the State having difficulties understanding their own regulations.

C. All Hazard Mitigation Plan, Phase I – Natural Hazards (*Requested by: All Commissioners*)

Ms. Adler, Emergency Management Program Coordinator:

- spoke regarding the four-step process for hazard mitigation planning;
- spoke regarding the prioritization of risks;
- advised that the Castle Mountain Fault location has been identified for the All Hazard Mitigation Plan, as required by Federal Emergency Management Agency; and
- advised that the highest danger area is six miles out form the fault.

Commissioner Masteller:

- noted that not all of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's flood zones have been mapped; and
- queried whether the Hazard Mitigation Plan has gone beyond what has been mapped.

Ms. Adler:

- stated that to meet the requirements for the plan they only had to show one map taken all the way through the process;
- advised that most of the Borough's flood zone maps are dated from 1986;
- advised that the Borough's Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan meets the Federal Hazard Mitigation Act requirements;
- stated that plans need to be thought through when the community is not under pressure;
- spoke regarding hazard mitigation strategies;
- stated that education is the best hazard mitigation there is to use;
- spoke regarding partnerships with other jurisdictions and agencies;
- spoke to the need to prepare for emergencies;
- advised that the All-Hazard Incident Management Team uses the Incident Command System; and
- spoke regarding the training and exercises that are done in preparation for an emergency.

Commissioner Palin spoke regarding the need for the community to be prepared for a disaster.

Ms. Adler:

- stated that the public needs to be prepared to take care of themselves during a time of emergency; and
- spoke regarding the education that is provided to the public.

Assemblymember Vehrs:

- spoke regarding the hurricane disaster in New Orleans;
- advised that she would like to be made aware of the meetings that are taking place regarding hazard mitigation; and
- spoke regarding the public needing to know the basic essentials that they will need in case of an emergency.

Discussion ensued regarding the need to educate the public regarding hazard mitigation.

(The special meeting recess at 8:04 p.m. and reconvened at 8:17 p.m.)

D. Development Permits *(Requested by: Assemblymember Woods)*

Mr. Jones, Planning Division Chief:

- advised that it is estimated that there is a 15 percent participation rate with the current permitting process;
- stated that the Borough does not have the ability to know what sort of development is occurring throughout the Borough; therefore it is difficult to plan appropriately;
- advised that development permits would improve the level of compliance of existing regulations, promote responsible development, and provide educational materials;
- spoke regarding the various actions that will require a development permit;
- spoke regarding the submittal requirements for the developer; and
- advised that an adhoc committee would be put together to work on a draft ordinance.

Assemblymember Vehrs:

- advised that she is a member of the Wasilla Soil Conservation group; and
- opined that a member of the Wasilla Soil Conservation group should be a part of the adhoc committee.

Assemblymember Kvalheim queried identifying and enforcing violations.

Mr. Jones stated that this is a complaint driven process.

Mr. O'Brien advised that the process will be more proactive.

Commissioner Larson:

- spoke to getting the banks behind the permitting process; and
- stated that if the developer wants financing the banks need to require a development permit from the Borough.

Commission Masteller queried what the education plan is to let the public know that a permit is required.

Mr. Jones:

- advised that there is no specific education plan yet; and
- stated there would need to be a specific time period of when the plan goes into effect and the enforcement of the process.

Assemblymember Bettine queried what the benefits of the permitting process would be other than less variances being requested.

Mr. O'Brien:

- stated that the permit would provide the Borough the opportunity to know what is happening with development; and
- spoke regarding the time and money that is spent on variances, vacations, and set-back violations.

Mr. Duffy:

- stated that depending on the scale of the development, a traffic impact analysis would be required;
- noted that the traffic impact analysis would give an understanding of what the impacts are going to be on the existing road system; and
- opined that the costs should be born by the person that is negatively impacting the road system.

E. South Denali Update (*Requested by: Planning Administration*)

Ms. Probasco:

- advised that this is a joint effort of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Alaska State Parks, Department of Transportation, and the National Park Service;
- stated that the guiding vision is to enhance recreational and access opportunities throughout South Denali;
- advised that the two sites that were most likely to meet the goals of the project were the Peters Hills site and the Parks Highway site;
- spoke regarding the South Denali project goals;
- spoke regarding providing summer and winter recreational activities;
- spoke regarding working with local communities in the planning effort;
- spoke regarding the differences in costs of the Peters Hills Alternative and the Parks Highway Alternative;
- noted that there is a potential for year-round public usage at the Parks Highway Alternative; and
- spoke regarding the site development plans for the Peters Hills Alternative and the Parks Highway Alternative.

Mr. Heikes, Matanuska-Susitna Borough Superintendent for the Alaska State Parks:

- stated that it became apparent going through this process that the Denali State Park Master Plan would need to be amended to accommodate South Denali;
- spoke regarding the 1989 master plan;
- advised that amendments to the master plan are being drafted to address the changes; and
- advised that there is a station set up specifically for the master plan amendments at the public meetings.

Ms. Jenne queried if the road to the Peters Hills site would be by bus or private vehicles.

Mr. Heikes:

- advised that both sites would be accessed by bus only;
- stated that each site only has a minimum amount of land;
- stated that large parking sites would heavily impact the experience; and

- advised that he would assume that the tour buses would need to move passengers onto a shuttle bus to get to the site.

Discussion ensued regarding access to the site locations.

Commissioner Jenne spoke regarding concerns on the impact of tourism to the sites.

Mr. Heikes:

- advised that there would be a public meeting November 2, 2005, at the Cottonwood Public Safety Building; and
- noted that there will be more information and maps available to review.

Commissioner Jenne:

- spoke regarding the Alaska Railroad's interest in Curry Ridge; and
- noted that there have been requests for the use of the triangle area.

Mr. Heikes:

- advised that there have been meetings with the Alaska Railroad;
- advised that the Alaska Railroad does have long-range plans to get across the Susitna River and shorter range plans for the use of Curry Ridge; and
- advised that the Alaska Railroad plans are not part of South Denali.

Commissioner Masteller:

- noted that 98 percent of the impact is on State park lands; and
- queried where the funds would come from to pay for South Denali.

Mr. Heikes:

- advised that most of the planning, design, and construction funds will be Federal;
- advised that there have been preliminary discussions on operating costs; and
- stated that as of now, all that has been agreed on is that South Denali would be jointly operated and jointly funded.

Assemblymember Bettine:

- queried whether private lands near the site may be developed; and
- queried whether a long-term economic development impact has been done.

Mr. Heikes advised that there is an existing Denali State Parks Special Land Use District that the Borough created 20 years ago.

Mr. Duffy:

- stated that the corridor from the end of the State park to Rabbit Creek is being looked at to control the corridor; and
- advised that there is no separate economic analysis.

Commissioner Jenne spoke regarding the need of the communities to be involved in the triangle plan due to the impact on the river.

Discussion ensued regarding the triangle area.

Ms. Probasco:

- spoke regarding the project timeline;
- advised that the public comment period is from September 15, 2005, through November 15, 2005; and
- advised that the final plan will be distributed in February 2006.

VII. MAYOR, ASSEMBLY, PLANNING COMMISSION, AND STAFF COMMENTS

Commissioner Jenne:

- expressed concerns regarding the impacts on the triangle area;
- opined that there needs to be a grass roots planning effort; and
- stated that the triangle area needs to be protected.

Commissioner Webster opined that the development permits need to be kept simple.

Assemblymember Colberg:

- stated that the Peters Hills Alternate is an incredible place to visit; and
- spoke regarding he and Mr. Duffy meeting with Congressman Young to discuss the Knik Arm Bridge.

Assemblymember Woods spoke regarding the need to do what is best for the land regarding development permits.

Assemblymember Kvalheim:

- spoke to the need for addressing on houses; and
- stated that there is a need to have addressing that can be seen from the road while doing the land acknowledgement permits.

Mr. Duffy advised that there is a separate public information campaign that deals with addressing.

Assemblymember Vehrs:

- advised that she shares Commissioner Jenne's concerns regarding the triangle area;
- stated that the triangle plan needs to be reviewed; and
- requested that the Manager start working on the triangle plan.

Mr. Duffy:

- advised that he was enthusiastic while he and Assemblymember Colberg where in Congressman Young's office; and
- advised that at the time they met with Congressman Young, the earmarks were not going to be deducted.

Mayor Anderson:

- stated that the south side development has been around a long time and it is good to see it come back;
- spoke regarding the impacts on the triangle area;
- spoke regarding the potential impacts that the Alaska Railroad will have on Curry Ridge; and
- stated that he is glad to see that the development permits are on track.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The special meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

/ S /

TIMOTHY L. ANDERSON, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:

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MICHELLE M. MCGEHEE, CMC, Borough Clerk

Minutes approved: 11/15/05