

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The special meeting of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly was held on December 6, 2005, at the Borough Assembly Chambers, 350 E. Dahlia Avenue, Palmer, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 4 p.m. by Mayor Timothy L. Anderson for the purpose of convening as a committee of the whole to discuss economic development and a four-year university in the Borough.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Assembly members present and establishing a quorum were:

Ms. Lynne Woods, Assembly District No. 1  
Mr. Bill Allen, Assembly District No. 2 (*arrived at 4:36 p.m.*)  
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. Jim Colver, Assembly District 6 (*Deputy Mayor*)

Staff in attendance were:

Ms. Michelle M. McGehee, CMC, Borough Clerk  
Mr. John Duffy, Borough Manager

**III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

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

GENERAL CONSENT: The agenda was approved as presented.

**IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Ms. Sara Jansen, a former member of the Assembly.

**V. ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

**A. COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE RE: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – 4-YEAR  
UNIVERSITY**

*(The Assembly entered committee of the whole at this time.)*

Dr. Paul Dauphinais, Matanuska-Susitna College Director:

- provided a presentation reviewing the four questions that were brought up by the Chancellor when the subject of a four-year university was first discussed: (1) what is meant by a four-year college, (2) what is the justification for what is proposed, (3) what is the conceptual framework for this idea, and (4) is the idea to support general purpose baccalaureate programs (BLS), duplicate the University of Anchorage Alaska on a smaller scale-comprehensive, or have a limited number of specific degree programs; and
- stated that he would like to focus on the justification for a four-year college.

Assemblymember Kvalheim queried the meaning of a “commuter” college.

Dr. Dauphinais replied that a commuter college does not provide residence facilities.

Assemblymember Woods stated that there is a workforce, community, and cultural need for higher education in the Borough.

Assemblymember Vehrs:

- stated that a need for higher education does exist with the workforce in the Borough;
- opined that residents are not prepared for the vocational technology future involving the pipeline;
- stated that the college will be pivotal in helping future pipeline workers’ transition to other careers after the pipeline is completed;
- spoke to a need to help people identify their options regarding community college, a four-year university, or vocational school education; and
- discussed the cultural and economic development need.

Dr. Dauphinais stated that the tech-prep program does many of the things that Assemblymember Vehrs was discussing.

Assemblymember Bettine:

- discussed the shortage of health care workers, nurses, and pharmaceutical careers;
- stated that regarding the citizenship need, many of today’s high school students are going to local colleges;
- opined that a local four-year university would help to educate the youth in a more affordable way; and
- noted that she would like to see the University of Alaska work with the School District on their new vocational school.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- the economic development benefits of a four-year university; and
- the cultural need for a four-year university.

Dr. Dauphinais spoke to the distance education options available to students.

Mr. Duffy spoke to the discipline and social aspects of college that need to be built before distance education programs can be effective.

Mayor Anderson:

- stated that generally speaking, it is a different type of person that is taking distance education courses, and not usually the typical college student; and
- spoke to distance education being beneficial to residents in the outlying areas of the Borough.

Assemblymember Kvalheim:

- inquired how dorms could be included as part of the four-year university plan; and
- spoke to the Alaska Scholars Program.

Dr. Dauphinais advised that obtaining dorms are something that has to be built into the campus master plan.

Assemblymember Vehrs:

- spoke to the shortage of nurses; and
- discussed growing from a bedroom community to a stabilized community.

Discussion ensued regarding:

- the role of a four-year university in the economic development of the Borough; and
- the growth of the Borough.

Dr. Dauphinais stated that 49 of the top 50 paying jobs currently require a four-year degree.

Assemblymember Allen spoke to the need for engineers in the Alaska to assist with the growing need for transportation links.

Dr. Dauphinais stated that the impression he has received from this discussion is that the Assembly is looking for a hybrid institution, one dealing with the vocational and technical degrees and another dealing with liberal arts.

Mr. Duffy stated that it would also involve specific sectors such as healthcare and tourism/hospitality.

Assemblymember Allen inquired regarding what niche would serve the community the best.

Dr. Dauphinais:

- opined that a broad base of learning with specific niches would be the better choice; and
- spoke to researching the long-term technical areas with liberal arts.

Discussion ensued regarding the different sectors for offering degrees.

*(The Assembly exited committee of the whole at this time.)*

**VI. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION (Three minutes per person.)**

*(There was no audience participation.)*

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

Assemblymember Woods stated that a four-year university would offer great opportunities for the community and would be a real asset.

Assemblymember Vehrs:

- discussed a study conducted in Italy after World War II to see which towns were successful at rebuilding and noted that they all had a common thread, a choir; and
- opined that she views a four-year college as the Borough's own choir.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The special meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m.

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TIMOTHY L. ANDERSON, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:

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MICHELLE M. MCGEHEE, CMC, Borough Clerk

Minutes approved: 01/03/06