

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY/ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD

Joint Meeting of June 9, 1998

1. **CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was convened at 10:10 a.m. by Assembly Chair Fay Von Gemmingen in the Mayor's Conference Room, 632 West 6th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska.

2. **ROLL CALL:**

Assembly Members Present: Charles Wohlforth, Bob Bell, Pat Abney, Dan Kendall, George Wuerch, Melinda Taylor, Kevin Meyer, Fay Von Gemmingen, Cheryl Clementson, Ted Carlson, Joe Murdy.

Assembly Members Absent: None.

School Board Members Present: Kathi Gillespie, Dave Werdal, Peggy Robinson-Wilson, Rita Holthouse, Harriet Drummond, Debbie Ossiander.

School Board Members Absent: Bettye Davis (excused.)

3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The pledge was led by Chair Von Gemmingen.

4. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS JOINT MEETINGS:**

A. Joint Assembly/School Board Meeting - November 4, 1997

Mr. Meyer moved,
seconded by Mr. Bell,
and it passed without
objection,

to approve the minutes of the
Joint Assembly/School Board meeting
of November 4, 1997.

5. **ADDENDUM TO AGENDA:** None.

6. **ITEMS OF BUSINESS:**

- A. Budget Revisions/Uses of Increased State Education Foundation Funding (SB 36)
- B. Impact of Retroactive 70/30 Capital Grants
- C. Future School Bonds (SB11)/Next Year's Bond Requirements Planning

President Drummond reported the School Board unanimously approved a budget increase request of \$7,832,244 to the Anchorage School District (ASD) General Fund, to be funded by State revenues. She asked Superintendent Bob Christal to explain his recommendation for this request.

Superintendent Christal noted Assembly Resolution AR 98-177(S) would be considered by the Assembly at its regular meeting tonight. It is accompanied by two ASD memorandums explaining details of the budget increase request. He felt thanks were owed to State Legislators and the Assembly for efforts to rewrite the State Education Funding formula. He said increased funding would be used for technological advances, building maintenance and to reduce class size. Mr. Christal discussed plans to decrease class size, add counselors and technology labs in high schools, add safety officers in District middle schools, and increase school custodian hours, which will enhance preventative maintenance. A pilot retraining program for custodians in the Chugiak/Eagle River area has been very successful. Increased State revenues will also be used for additional school buses and various school supplies. He explained the timing of the request would allow hiring and placement of teachers for the coming school year.

In response to Mr. Bell, Mr. Christal said placement of new teachers and classes would vary depending on the building. New rooms will not be needed at high schools because of rotating class schedules. Relocatable buildings will be reallocated across the District, but no new relocatable buildings will be added. In some elementary schools, new classes will be placed in rooms used for art, while the art teacher may use a mobile cart. School boundaries will not be changed for this purpose. He explained the new technology coordinator position at the high schools will perform several functions including teaching, training of teachers and management of equipment.

In response to Mr. Bell, Mr. Christal discussed the effect of SB11 on previously-approved bonds. He said 1996 and 1997 bond payments have begun. Officials are uncertain whether reimbursement could be received for these bonds; it is certain that reimbursement could be received for 1998 bonds. There are significant needs for the future. Some people feel the reimbursement should be used on 1996 and 1997 bonds; however, the ASD administration decided a balance between 1998 and future needs was preferable.

In response to Mr. Bell, Janet Stokesbary, ASD Chief Financial Officer, explained 1996 and 1997 bonds have been sold. Therefore, there have been one and two years' worth of principal and interest payments. There is a question of whether the State would reimburse on a retroactive basis.

President Drummond discussed seeking reimbursement for past years' bonds. She explained the State Department of Education (DOE) must approve whether a particular project is eligible according to its standards. However, schools were marketed according to the needs in Anchorage, rather than according to the DOE standards. It has been difficult to deal with DOE on this issue, which should be a factor when considering retroactive reimbursement.

Ms. Gillespie recalled the difficulties in getting approval for Goldenview and Mirror Lake schools. In light of upcoming expensive high school renovations, she felt some of the money should be held back as an incentive for these projects. She pointed out large high school projects might not be supported by taxpayers with elementary students or those without children.

In response to Mr. Meyer, Mr. Christal discussed the importance of using the increased revenues to reduce class size in all grades, rather than only in elementary levels.

In response to Mr. Wohlforth, Mr. Christal discussed the hiring process for new teachers. He said recruitment in general was very successful, although there have been problems with special education, occupational therapists and librarians. He noted there was no training program for librarians in the State. Mr. Christal also discussed recruitment of substitute teachers. He clarified other points in the memorandum detailing budget expenses.

In response to Mr. Carlson, Mr. Christal said he would investigate using some of the revenue increase for an after-school activity bus program. However, he stressed that item was not a high priority compared to other needs.

Mr. Carlson requested information on the cost of the program before it was discontinued.

President Drummond pointed out between 1989 and 1997 the ASD cut about \$50 million-worth of programs. About \$7 million this year and \$3 million next year from increased State revenues will not allow return of all the eliminated programs; officials will have to choose carefully which programs to reinstate. Class size reduction is a priority.

Mr. Wuerch pointed out the ASD budget has not been reduced since he has been on the Assembly. He asked the record reflect that perhaps Ms. Drummond's comments referred to \$50 million in cuts to desired programs.

Ms. Abney added although the budget has not been reduced, the number of students in the District has increased significantly.

Ms. Robinson-Wilson responded to comments on the activity bus program. She pointed out the People Mover travels past most ASD schools, although routes may not be convenient. She added there are some secondary schools not served by People Mover; this is an area where the Assembly may assist the District, by providing service to every school in the District.

In response to Mr. Bell, Mr. Christal said Assembly approval of AR 98-177(S) tonight would not prevent pursuing reimbursement of 1996 and 1997 bonds in the future.

In response to Mr. Kendall, Mr. Christal said priorities for future construction bonds varies from school to school. Major renovation for Chugiak, Dimond and Service High schools and Government Hill elementary are the most immediate needs. An analysis of Dimond High is in progress to determine whether replacement or renovation will be appropriate. A similar discussion is ongoing in the Chugiak/Eagle River community about Chugiak High School.

Mr. Kendall asked for a presentation at the next joint meeting on how the new funding formula will operate and affect the ASD budget.

D. Future School Site Needs

Norm Holthouse, ASD Executive Director, Technology/MIS, said he was charged with projecting needs through the year 2025. Current techniques for projecting student enrollment are valid for about six years. Beyond six years, assumptions about birth rates and migration would have to be made which are not part of the model. He used data from the U.S. Census Bureau, which has made projections for the Alaska school-age population to 2025. According to this data, Anchorage 2025 enrollment would be about 67,500. Assuming grade population distribution would remain the same, in 2025 twenty new elementary schools, two new middle schools and three new high schools would be necessary. To determine where the school sites should be located, Mr. Holthouse said he examined growth patterns for the last ten years. Roughly three elementary schools would be needed in Chugiak/Eagle River, six in southeast Anchorage, six in southwest Anchorage, three in northeast and three in northwest Anchorage. One middle school in northeast and one in southwest Anchorage would be needed. One high school each is needed in Southwest and Southeast Anchorage and in Chugiak/Eagle River. The Chugiak/Eagle River site has already been reserved.

Mr. Wohlforth noted a study of buildable land in the Anchorage bowl was recently performed. Results showed a lack of space in the bowl for more housing construction at the current density. He asked if coordination with the Municipal Community Planning and Development (CPD) Department was done to help the growth projections.

Mr. Holthouse said his analysis was fairly informal; he did not coordinate with the CPD Department.

Mr. Wohlforth requested District officials coordinate with the Municipality for demographic and development information.

In response to Mr. Meyer, Mr. Holthouse said for his analysis, he defined Southeast Anchorage as the Service High attendance area; Southwest Anchorage as Dimond attendance; Northeast Anchorage as Bartlett/East attendance; and Northwest Anchorage as the West High attendance area.

Mr. Kendall pointed out there is more land available now than there will be in twenty years. He felt school sites should be acquired soon for the long term.

In response to Ms. Gillespie, Mr. Holthouse said his analysis included the assumption that high schools would remain at the current design capacity of 2,000 students.

E. High School Education Specifications Update Re: Size of Schools and Sites

Mr. Christal said discussions on this topic are continuing, and have been ongoing for about six months. He hoped design standards would be ready at the end of this summer, so they could be used for new schools or renovations. Currently, Anchorage high schools range from 1,500 to 2,300 students. Although there is no consensus yet, he felt many people support design of schools to accommodate about 1,600 students.

Ms. Osslander added the options being discussed are schools with capacity for 1,200 students, 1,600 and 2,000 students. The approach seems to be to allow some discretion among various communities; some may choose a smaller or larger design.

In response to Mr. Bell, Mr. Christal explained design consultants would work with the School Board to provide an analysis of whether the schools should be replaced or renovated. The next step would be deciding the size, based on the education specifications that will be complete later this summer.

Ms. Drummond added the design consultants were hired to work at the direction of the Board. They were selected with the intent that they would be the architects for the entire project, but given a limited scope so far. This included identifying school needs, making recommendations and developing schematic designs and cost estimates for consideration by the Board.

Ms. Gillespie noted State Department of Education approval is a factor in this issue. Replacement of Dimond High has been turned down twice by DOE. The Board is involved in discussions with DOE about Dimond High. There is a question of whether DOE will allow downsizing a 2,000 student school to a 1,600 size.

F. Status of Union Contracts/Negotiation Schedule

Lee Wilson, ASD Executive Director, Labor Relations, said negotiations with three groups are ongoing currently. They are Local 71 custodial staff, clerical, and Teamster bus drivers. Contracts for all three groups expire June 30, 1998. Some progress has been made, but settlement is not imminent.

G. Charter School Space

Mr. Christal said with the help of Municipal Operations Manager George Vakalis, a location for the Aquarian Charter School has been established for one year. It is on Tudor Road in the area of the Municipal Public Works Department. Aquarian officials will have to find a new location after the 1998/99 school year. He said there is a significant District-wide problem finding space for charter schools. Charter school operators are being frustrated when looking for space because of Municipal Building and Zoning Code issues. Most available non-District space will not meet codes for schools. There is a difference between private and public school codes. He felt the issue would likely come before the Assembly soon.

Mr. Wohlforth noted he submitted an ordinance for Assembly consideration to allow charter, private and parochial schools to be located in the Central Business District. There is some vacant space in the downtown area which might be suitable for charter schools.

Ms. Robinson-Wilson felt private and public schools should have the same standard.

Carol Comeau, ASD Assistant Superintendent, Instruction, said a list of the differences in Code for private and public schools is available. This is a concern for charter schools. Some charter school operators are willing to renovate space if zoning could be resolved.

Mr. Wohlforth said zoning issues are easier than building code issues. Building codes are so complex and technical that they cannot be understood by laypeople. If building codes must be amended, it would be advisable to hire professionals or establish a committee to review the issue.

In response to Ms. Clementson, Ms. Comeau said charter schools have the ability to access two types of grants through the State. They are planning grants and implementation grants, both of which can be used for renovations and leasing. Once a charter school signs a contract with the School Board, grant funds can be awarded almost immediately.

Ms. Gillespie stressed the Board needs the Assembly's help on this issue, in a timely manner. There has been a lot of discussion about changing the charter school law, as a result of ASD inability to provide space for these schools. She suggested if changing building codes is too difficult, perhaps a variance procedure can be established, to allow charter schools to conform to the same standards as private schools. She felt a resolution should be reached by January, 1999.

Ms. Clementson said she was opposed to variances or waiving standards for public school facilities.

7. **COMMENTS:**

Ms. Abney commended District officials for helping with SB36.

Ms. Osslander felt the success of SB36 was due to support from many sources, including the Alaska Municipal League, the Assembly and the School Board. She thanked the Assembly for its help.

Ms. Gillespie thanked the Legislators who were key in this issue: Randy Phillips John Torgeson, Gary Wilkins, Dave Donley, Mark Hanley and Gene Therriault.

8. **SCHEDULING OF NEXT JOINT MEETING:**

The next Joint Assembly/School Board meeting was scheduled for September 29, 1998.

(Clerk's Note: The next meeting was later rescheduled to September 22, 1998.)

6. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Chair
Anchorage Assembly

President
Anchorage School Board

ATTEST:

Recording Secretary

Date Minutes Approved: September 22, 1998

VC/db