

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY/ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD

Joint Meeting of August 17, 1999

**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was convened at 1:00 p.m. by Assembly Chairman George Wuerch in the Mayor's Conference Room, 632 West 6th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska.

**2. ROLL CALL:**

Assembly Members Present: Dan Kendall, Dan Sullivan, Pat Abney, Allan Tesche, Melinda Taylor, George Wuerch, Kevin Meyer, Anna Fairclough, Dick Tremaine, Fay Von Gemmingen, Cheryl Clementson.

Assembly Members Absent: None.

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

School Board Members Absent: Bettye Davis (excused), Kathi Gillespie (excused.)

**3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

The pledge was led by Chairman Wuerch.

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

A. April 6, 1999

Ms. Abney moved,  
seconded by Ms. Taylor,

to approve the minutes of the joint meeting of April 6, 1999 with an amendment on page 3, Ms. Abney's comment, to read: "...to address the south Anchorage High School construction concerns."

School Board President Robinson noted she, and perhaps other members of the School Board, had not received an advance copy of the minutes. The School Board members took some time to review them.

Question was called on the motion to approve the minutes as amended and it passed without objection.

**5. ADDENDUM TO AGENDA:**

President Robinson requested the topic of Municipal bus routes' service to Service High School be discussed. There was no objection.

Ms. Taylor requested a discussion of emergency preparedness kits be added to item 6.B. There was no objection.

**6. ITEMS OF BUSINESS:**

A. South Anchorage High School Site/Eagle River High School Site

Mr. Tremaine pointed out the site for the south Anchorage high school was selected 15 years ago. Since then, a great deal of unanticipated development has occurred, especially in the Klatt Road area. He said there was a lot of interest among local residents in choosing a different site for the school.

Ms. Abney concurred. She has received many requests for reconsideration of the location of the site.

Ms. Clementson, chair of the joint School Site Selection Committee, said she has been inundated with requests to change the site of the school. According to the Municipal Code and the Community Planning and Development (CPD) Department, there is no process in place to address such an idea. After a site is selected and purchased by the Municipality, management authority for the site is transferred to the Anchorage School District (ASD). It is up to the School Board to make a decision about changing the site; the Assembly has no authority to pursue that option.

ASD Superintendent Bob Christal pointed out there has been a lot of interest in long term planning for school sites. This particular site was selected 15 years ago, with such planning in mind. The site was selected through a valid process, and the 15-year-old estimates that a new high school would be needed in south Anchorage have been proven accurate. Service High is the most overcrowded high school in Anchorage; it is the largest high school in the State. When the bond question was on the ballot at the last regular Municipal election, the proposition was specific for this site. The District has been advised by bond counsel that the bond funds could not be used for a site that was different from that which was approved by the voters. Prior to the election, the District met with community groups and committed to work with the community and Municipal departments to ensure the correct infrastructure is in place for the school, to mitigate any intrusions on the community. If a decision is made to build a school on a different site, the bond funds approved at last April's election could not be used to build the school.

Ray Amstead, a design manager for ASD, said Mr. Christal requested creation of a coordinating committee. The Committee included members of the CPD, Public Works, Fire Departments and members of affected community councils and area PTA members. It was a diverse group that has helped with development of the school design. At the next meeting of the Committee, later this week, a recently-completed Limited Traffic Impact Analysis will be discussed. Another public meeting will be held on August 25, 1999 at Bowman Elementary to allow any interested parties to voice their concerns.

In response to Mr. Tesche, Mr. Amstead confirmed some contracts have been executed, one for the company that did the Traffic Impact Analysis, and another with ECI Hyer, Inc. who is the architect for the project.

In response to Mr. Tesche, Mr. Christal said in order to build on a different site, several things would have to be done. Another site would have to be identified; funds would have to be identified to purchase another site; and another bonding process would be necessary. He said there were no funds available to identify and select another site.

In response to Mr. Tesche, Mr. Amstead said the goal date to open a new school was September, 2004. He felt selection of a different site would likely delay the project at least two years. He said the cost would also increase, because of inflation.

Ms. Fairclough noted the Rabbit Creek Community Council, among other individuals and community groups, submitted letters in opposition to the proposed site. She questioned the plans for sewer service to the new school.

Mr. Amstead said public utilities adjacent to the site were available and would be able to support the school's needs.

In response to Ms. Abney, Mr. Christal said the increased costs as a result of choosing a new site would come from the purchase cost of a new site. In addition, he believed there would be increased construction costs because of the resulting delay of two or three years.

In response to Chairman Wuerch, Mr. Amstead explained there would be significant upgrades to the adjacent road that serves the proposed school site. He said there would be coordination between ASD, the Municipality and the State about the specific logistics. He said the Assembly representatives on the AMATS committee would also be included in that coordination.

Ms. Clementson said the road was planned to appear on the bond project list in 2000. It is a collector street, and as far as she knows, is not on the AMATS project list; it will be funded through local road bonds.

Mr. Tremaine noted the Bayshore/Klatt Community Council has submitted a letter requesting the School Board not to take any action that would preclude a change in the site. He pointed out Proposition 11, on the ballot at the April 1998 election, approved \$35 million of the school bonds. The language in that bond includes a statement "The proposed educational capital improvement projects, which include, but are not limited to, the following: ... the south Anchorage High School construction..." He questioned how these particular funds are obligated to the proposed site.

Mr. Christal explained over the next few years, sales of the bonds will be scheduled to proceed. He noted according to bond counsel, bond funds for roof replacements could be used for roofs other than those approved, if there were funds left over after the approved roofs were completed. They have never been of the opinion that bond funds for a major project such as a school could be redirected without voter approval.

Janet Stokesbary, Chief Financial Officer of ASD, said bond counsel's advice several years ago regarding using bond funds for a different type of project was to get redirection approval by the voters. The projects were the Northern Lights and Fairview schools. In the past, the District has been limited to completing the projects on a bond proposition first, before adding other projects. She referred the question of why the bond funds were limited to a certain site to bond counsel.

Chairman Wuerch requested Mr. Christal provide a copy of bond counsel's opinion on this matter to Assembly members.

Ms. Abney commented she requested an opinion from the Municipal Attorney's office, who contacted bond counsel. Her understanding from them was the bonds were site-specific.

Mr. Tremaine accepted that answer, and Chairman Wuerch withdrew his request of Mr. Christal.

In response to Mr. Tremaine, Chairman Wuerch said he felt it was unfortunate that the full cost of the project, including the road improvement, was not known by the voters at the time they voted on the project. He pointed out this is a normal process. He suggested Mr. Tremaine pursue the issue as a member of the AMATS committee. He noted some of the AMATS priorities are driven by public institution infrastructure needs.

Ms. Clementson pointed out the AMATS process is long and cumbersome. An example is improvement of Abbot Road, which was not high enough on the AMATS priority list to be improved prior to completion of the new southeast Anchorage elementary school, which is served by that road. She suggested the Municipality and ASD improve their coordination efforts, perhaps by yearly or semi-yearly meetings to compare the AMATS list with ASD needs.

Mr. Sullivan added it might be good to have a representative from the District on the AMATS committee, because the relationship between roads and the District's facilities is so important. He questioned the design costs of the new high school.

Mr. Amstead explained the entire project fees have not been negotiated. They have only started the initial planning effort. The ASD's practice is to delay until the full scope of work is known. The goal is to eliminate as many contingencies as possible in the design fees. He felt an estimate of between \$4 and \$5 million was too high.

Mr. Sullivan felt there were advantages to long-range planning. However, a disadvantage was that situations continually change. He felt if there were any way to achieve efficiencies in the design by adopting a standard high school design, it would be preferable.

Mr. Amstead pointed out the District does design with standard education specifications. There are options within those specifications that can be chosen by individual communities. He confirmed the proposed site has topography changes of about 120 feet.

In response to Chairman Wuerch, Mr. Amstead said the site was 50 acres, and was rectangle-shaped. It is not too steep. He felt it was a very good site. However, road access is a problem.

President Robinson pointed out the District is required, and does, prepare and submit a six-year capital improvement project, which is forwarded to the Assembly. This tool is one way to communicate future infrastructure needs for District facilities.

Ms. Ossiander said the Board has been discussing high school building prototypes. They are working hard on the issue.

Ms. Clementson noted the next School Site Selection Committee meeting was scheduled for September 14, 1999.

In response to Mr. Kendall, Mr. Amstead gave an update on the status of the Eagle River School Site. He said the site was reserved a number of years ago, and is currently held by the Heritage Land Bank. The five-year reservation will soon expire, and the District has requested it continue to be reserved as a school site. It is lower in priority than the site for a Muldoon middle school, so more energy is being spent on that project currently. When that issue is complete, the Eagle River site will be addressed. Mr. Amstead explained the CPD Department would develop a report, forward it to the Planning and Zoning Commission and ASD, and after action there the report would go to the Assembly for final approval.

In response to Mr. Kendall, Cathy Hammond of CPD confirmed the Eagle River school was the next priority after the Muldoon middle school. The Muldoon school will also have a community center. They suggested to ASD the possibility of combining the Eagle River secondary site selection with the elementary site selection, which is the third priority for the area. She had hoped the Muldoon site selection would be completed by October, but there have been some unavoidable delays, and it is not known at this time when the process will be complete. Also, CPD has committed staff resources to completion of the Comprehensive Plan revision. In recognition of the importance of the Eagle River site selection, she suggested CPD staff meet with ASD staff to review their options. One option might be for ASD to contract out the selection process, which is allowable under the law. She said they could review the options and attend the Site Selection Committee meeting next month to discuss various options.

Mr. Kendall cautioned the site selection has not been formally addressed throughout the community. He has heard concerns that the school not be located next to a prison, or other locations. He encouraged Ms. Hammond not to limit consideration to the Heritage Land Bank parcel.

Ms. Hammond agreed that was not the intent. She acknowledged the site was reserved without benefit of a formal site selection study. All other options in the area will be evaluated.

Ms. Fairclough felt any way to expedite the process would be helpful. She pointed out Chugiak High was the most overcrowded high school in the District, and received the least amount of funds in the last bond issue.

Chairman Wuerch said it appeared if the Assembly or School Board wish to change the south Anchorage site, it would require initiation of a resolution or ordinance to stop the project.

#### B. School Bomb Threats/Fire Alarm Safety

Superintendent Christal explained over the last few years, the District has worked with the Police Department and established some very positive relationships. The one area that remains a concern for District personnel is the procedure when a bomb threat is received. School administrators must then go through the school to search for the bomb, because the Police Department does not perform the active search. The concern from school administrators is that they are not trained to perform bomb searches. He introduced Pat McDowell, ASD executive director for high schools.

Ms. McDowell explained when bomb threats are received, the first action is to call the Police Department. The Police wait for school personnel to locate a bomb before they will call the bomb squad. Evacuating a school, especially a large high school, during winter months has its own logistic problems. Going through lockers is a lengthy procedure; the people who are involved in that process include the five school administrators, five safety and security personnel, the BPO, the auxiliary BPO, and herself or the secondary supervisor.

Ms. Abney said she made a request for information regarding this topic, and the answer from the administration explained the reason police do not search is because they are not familiar with the buildings. She was concerned, and wondered about the preparedness of the Police Department for a serious emergency.

Captain Bill Miller of the Anchorage Police Department said he was also in charge of the Explosives Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Squad. He explained the reason for police not searching schools because of unfamiliarity with the structure was sound. He said the EOD Squad receives training in Redstone Arsenal in Alabama, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's training ground for certified bomb squads. Currently, national training protocol is for people who are familiar with the facility look to see what things are out of place. Police do not ask school personnel to collect devices or move boxes to see if there is anything underneath. Those types of things are handled by police. However, they need a way to limit the search, and determine what may be a potential device and what may not. He was told this morning that the Fairbanks Police Department performs searches for Fairbanks schools; he was unaware what their bomb protocol and training is. He does know that Anchorage Police Department/Anchorage International Airport Bomb Squad is the only certified civilian bomb squad in the State. He clarified that familiarity with a building with regard to an explosive device is usually being familiar with the

various objects that are inside the facility. While the police are familiar with the layout of the school buildings, especially canine officers who respond to alarms on a regular basis, they are usually not familiar with objects or packages which may or may not be normal supplies for the school. He gave an example of a bomb threat at a women's service provider last weekend. Staff arriving in the morning saw a canister with a radioactive warning, and called police. After police arrived, one of the facility's doctors arrived, and explained he was using the canister to prop open the front door. That type of familiarity with the normal equipment and placement of things in a facility is important to allow police to focus their resources, and avoid destroying property which may not need destruction. Captain Miller explained the first priority of police is to save lives, and then property. In the quest to save lives, they attempt to destroy or disable a device on-scene. Their methods of device destruction usually result in destruction of the property as well.

In response to Ms. Von Gemmingen, Captain Miller said other than the Fairbanks example that he was recently told about, he was unaware of any place with a bomb squad where police search a facility to try to identify a device. That identification requires the help of the people who know which items belong in the facility. He could not comment at this time on the cost impact of having police accompany facility personnel while they perform searches. He added bomb threats are not only received by schools, but also women's facilities and doctors offices.

In response to Mr. Kendall, Captain Miller said police do respond and go to schools when bomb threats are received. An officer goes to the school and remains there until either the threat is gone, or the bomb squad is called. They assist and evaluate the situation while they are at the school. Every officer is trained to respond to a bomb threat.

In response to Mr. Christal, Captain Miller explained the responding officer would not be actively involved in the search. The officer will assist and evaluate the situation, and make a decision on whether to call the bomb squad. The decision on whether or not to evacuate a building, whether or not to return to a building and decisions of that type rests with the owner of the building, not the police officer. The Police Department does not have a bomb dog.

In response to Ms. Taylor, Captain Miller said the policy is the same for a private company as for schools. He reiterated the people who are familiar with the building are expected to inform police about unusual items or objects.

In response to Ms. Taylor, Ms. McDowell said school personnel have received no formal training for bomb searches. She explained when a threat is received, school staff are requested to help by looking at their work areas and determining if anything is out of place. Teachers look in their classrooms, and other staff look at common areas such as hallways and restrooms. The biggest area to search which takes a long time, are the school lockers. Approximately 2,000 lockers are searched individually.

Ms. Holthouse recalled her experience as a high school principal, when a bomb threat was received. The school was evacuated, and the police officer who responded would not approach the building. He instructed staff to notify him if they found anything suspicious. She said that was very disconcerting, and that feeling continues now. She pointed out looking for explosives is not part of the certification program for school administrators or teachers. There are very inexperienced people performing the searches. She noted schools are unique facilities, in that when a building is evacuated, the teachers must remain with the students to perform supervision; they are not free to leave the children to return to the school to perform searches. Consequently, searches are performed by administrators and security, who are not familiar with the teachers' classrooms. She hoped some sort of cooperative effort between police and school personnel could be developed.

In response to Mr. Meyer, Captain Miller said he did not believe the Anchorage International Airport staff used bomb dogs. He said in the past, the military had such a dog. There was a dog at APD until that animal was retired. He said there is some technology to detect devices, but it has limitations. Dogs also have limitations; it would be physically impossible for a dog to search 2,000 lockers because of the intensity and exhaustion.

Mr. Meyer agreed with Ms. Holthouse that a cooperative effort between police and school administrators should be developed.

Ms. Ossiander related the Board members' understanding of the procedure, as related by school administrators: The police officer goes to the school office and discusses the threat. Then administrators, who are often not familiar with classrooms, perform the search throughout the building. She was not comfortable with that procedure, and requested help from the Assembly in addressing the issue.

In response to Mr. Tesche, Captain Miller said he was unaware of any written memorandums or protocol approved by ASD and APD on how to handle bomb threats.

In response to Mr. Tesche, Mr. Christal also said he was unaware of any such documents.

Mr. Tesche agreed with Ms. Holthouse and Ms. Ossiander. He felt a written protocol between the two agencies was needed.

Mr. Tesche moved, and it died for lack of a second,	to direct Assembly staff to meet with ASD staff to discuss the issue, and to place the issue on the agenda for the next joint Assembly/School Board meeting.
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Chairman Wuerch suggested he first discuss the issue with the administration. He will report to Assembly members the results, within one week.

In response to Ms. Clementson, Captain Miller said there was one sergeant, four Airport officers and three APD officers on the bomb squad. They are not dedicated to this function; they have additional duties.

Ms. Clementson pointed out APD is trying to manage its resources. Often, when officers arrive on duty, there are calls waiting to be responded to. She felt before the Assembly interjected and directed some action, APD and ASD

administrations should meet and work on the issue, and report back to the Assembly. She felt the parties directly involved should determine how best to manage their resources.

In response to President Robinson, Ms. McDowell said bomb threats usually come in spurts. There were three received at Service High in January, 1999, when the temperature was about -30°. In the three week period after the shooting incident in Littleton, Colorado in April 1999, there were ten threats at Anchorage schools. The District received help on those threats from the military, who used their bomb dogs. The search took 90 minutes, which was a long time to have children waiting outdoors. She said usually, there are three or four threats per school in a year. The schools are not evacuated in each situation. There is always a preliminary search, and then a decision is made whether to evacuate or to take less drastic action.

Ms. Taylor requested Captain Miller to prepare statistics and an assessment of need for police to search a school, and present that to the Assembly Public Safety Committee.

Mr. Werdal noted the union representing school security officers has submitted a letter expressing their reluctance to continue performing bomb searches in the future. He questioned the response of the police if building occupants refused to perform the search.

Captain Miller responded in that case, police would not perform the search. The building manager is given a choice: either having building occupants search for unusual items, or not having a search at all. With regard to schools, he saw no reason why police officers could not accompany school personnel during the search. He felt that issue could be discussed further between APD and ASD.

Ms. Holthouse appreciated the support of some Assembly members in establishing a dialogue between the District and APD. She requested Chairman Wuerch report his findings, after meeting with the administration, to the School Board.

Mr. Tesche suggested the Assembly Public Safety Committee could be a vehicle for a dialogue between the parties.

Ms. Taylor questioned whether there are emergency kits in each school classroom, to deal with natural disasters.

Mr. Christal said emergency kits are located in each school. Equipment in each classroom varies. There are earthquake preparedness plans that have been purchased for school-wide use. He said teachers are not responsible for purchasing their own emergency kits.

Carol Comeau, Assistant ASD Superintendent, said schools and PTA organizations have done a lot of work in the last few years on earthquake preparedness. She knew of no schools where teachers were directed to purchase kits. She has heard of many schools requesting parents to supply goods for their child, which are stored in a container and returned home with the child at the end of the school year.

#### C. Site Selection Committee Issues/Public Works Representatives to Joint Committee

Ms. Clementson said a request for a Public Works representative on the Site Selection Committee came from an Assembly member. She explained the Committee is composed of Assembly members, School Board members and Planning & Zoning Commission members. There is also staff, which is primarily from the School District and the Community Planning and Development Department. Members of Public Works are invited to join Committee meetings, and have been involved in the past. She said the Committee could make a better effort to notify people about the meetings.

#### D. Construction Management Audit Follow-up

Mr. Christal said a lot of work is being done relative to the audit. He suggested a meeting be held in September or October for interested parties to review this work.

Mr. Tesche requested Assembly members receive a report or executive summary about one week prior to the meeting, so they can be better prepared.

#### E. ASD Construction Management Work Session: August 24, 1999 - 6 p.m.

Mr. Christal said this work session would include architects, engineers and contractors to speak about the new process for construction of the two new high schools. He invited Assembly members to attend.

#### F. ASD Contract Negotiations - 1998-1999; 1999-2000

Mr. Christal explained the District finished three major contract negotiations for 1998-1999. They are about to enter into three major contract negotiations with the teachers' union, the principals' union and the union for maintenance workers. He felt more time would be needed to discuss this topic in more depth.

#### G. ASD Budget Development - FY 2000-2001

Mr. Christal explained once the school year begins, the administration will begin to work with the School Board on the process for the 2000-2001 budget. He said the Assembly was provided with the tentative schedule.

Chairman Wuerch noted State revenue sharing has been decreased, and hoped the new State formula for education funding would be upheld by the Legislature.

#### H. Duplication/Consolidation of Functions

Ms. Fairclough felt it was remarkable that the Municipality and the ASD, who share some common things such as payroll and purchasing have not been able to coordinate and consolidate these functions. She pointed out if some functions could be consolidated, there would be a savings to taxpayers. She offered to participate in any discussions to pursue this goal.

Ms. Ossiander pointed out this item was a result of the last joint Assembly/School Board committee meeting to discuss this topic. There have been some significant efforts in the area of purchasing, which should be applauded and brought forward. She was more than happy to continue the discussions.

President Robinson said the Board could provide a list of those areas where services are shared. Many people are not aware of the many items that are shared.

I. Service High School public bus service

President Robinson pointed out the District does not have activity buses to bring students to the school after hours. There are also students who wish to arrive at school earlier than normal hours. The Board is concerned about elimination of the only public transportation service to Service High School, which serves over 2,000 students. It would eliminate the possibility of some students participating in some activities. They strongly encourage reconsideration of the decision to eliminate bus service. There are also parents who rely on public transportation to get to the school for visitations and meetings.

7. COMMENTS:

In response to Mr. Christal, Chairman Wuerch noted the date of the Municipal election was changed to the first Tuesday in April, which will be April 4, 2000. There will likely be a run-off election, which will occur on the first Tuesday in May.

8. SCHEDULING OF NEXT JOINT MEETINGS:

- A. November/December 1999
- B. February 2000
- C. May 2000

No further meetings were scheduled.

9. ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Von Gemmingen moved, to adjourn.  
seconded by Ms. Taylor,  
and it passed without  
objection,

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

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Chairman  
Anchorage Assembly

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President  
Anchorage School Board

ATTEST:

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Recording Secretary

Date Minutes Approved: December 14, 1999

VC/db