

# MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

## ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY

Minutes for Special Meeting of September 13, 2000

### 1. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was convened at 7:05 p.m. by Assembly Chair Fay Von Gemmingen in the Chugiak High School Auditorium, Chugiak, Alaska.

### 2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Dan Sullivan, Dick Tremaine, Pat Abney, Dan Kendall, Allan Tesche, Fay Von Gemmingen, Anna Fairclough, Melinda Taylor, Wilda Hudson, Cheryl Clementson.  
Absent: Kevin Meyer (excused).

Chair Von Gemmingen asked the Assembly members to introduce themselves, and she introduced Jane Ferguson, Municipal Clerk. Chair Von Gemmingen also introduced Ms. Toni Jones, a sociology instructor at the University of Alaska, Anchorage..

Ms. Jones, presented her students in attendance. She explained that part of their course of study this semester focused on the community and community change.

### 3. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING:

- A. **Ordinance No. AO 2000-119**, an ordinance amending Chapter 21.05, adding Chapter 21.06, **adopting the Anchorage 2020 Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan**, directing codification thereof and providing an effective date, Legal Department/Community Planning and Development.
1. Assembly Memorandum No. AM 663-2000.
  2. Information Memorandum No. AIM 81-2000.
- (CONTINUED FROM 7-25-00, 8-15-00, 8-23-00, 8-29-00, AND 9-12-00)

Chair Von Gemmingen opened the public hearing and asked if anyone wished to speak.

BOBBIE WELLS said she was a Birchwood Community Council member but was testifying as an individual. Ms. Wells said the community knew the Assembly would revisit their Comp Plan, but they wanted to get the Anchorage 2020 Plan out of the way first. She said the Anchorage 2020 Comp Plan was full of a lot of "weasel words," it was vague and ambiguous, and probably would not hold up in court. Examples of the "weasel words" that she provided included "a lively employment center" and "mixed use." With respect to the latter phrase, Ms. Wells said Eklutna, Incorporated, had introduced that term to the Municipality for land use, and the Birchwood Community Council had been instrumental in drafting the definition. She noted the definition had been changed in the Definitions Section of the Anchorage 2020 Comp Plan, and this concerned her. Ms. Wells felt the Plan was very good overall, and she noted that comparisons with the 1960/'61 Plan were included in the 2020 Comp Plan. Ms. Wells said she has served on the Citizens Advisory Committee and has been involved with updates to the Comprehensive Plan, Long Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, and Official Streets and Highways Plan. She said the key to the Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan was how it would be implemented and how thorough the revisions would be with respect to other plans that would need to be integrated and coordinated with the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Wells said it was important that the Assembly pay attention to what goes on at this public hearing. She asked them to keep in mind that Chugiak was a winter city. She also stressed that when it came time to rezone the underdeveloped land, she wanted corporate and government property to be zoned as well as individuals' property. She said they are currently overrun with land that is zoned transition, and it all belongs to government entities. Ms. Wells thanked the Assembly for coming to Chugiak.

In response to Mr. Tesche's question regarding whether the Alaska Railroad affected Chugiak/Eagle River operations, Ms. Wells said she was aware that the Alaska Railroad's position was they are exempt by State law from local planning and zoning ordinances. She said she had also read both the federal and the State versions of the Alaska Railroad Transfer Act, and she said both the Railroad and Eklutna, Inc., received special dispensations.

VIVIAN MENDENHALL, a resident of Rabbit Creek Road, said she also had written comments that she would submit via e-mail. She said this was a good Plan overall; it addressed the need for growth in the Anchorage bowl as well as maintaining the parts of our lifestyles that make Anchorage a special and attractive place to live. She said some of the good features of the Plan included needed development, maintenance of the character of neighborhoods, land-clearing standards in sensitive areas, maintenance of open space, and transportation planning. Ms. Mendenhall said she was a wildlife biologist, and she had also worked in land use planning. She urged the Assembly to retain the state/federal/city plan, Living With Wildlife in Anchorage: A Cooperative Planning Effort, which she said was an integral part of Anchorage 2020. She said this set of guidelines would be available for consideration along with development needs when proposals come before the City. She pointed out that surveys have shown that Anchorage residents value wildlife highly. Ms. Mendenhall noted that the hillside drainage study that was begun some years ago and was not completed due to lack of funding was specifically mentioned in strategies included in the March 2000 version of the Plan but had been deleted from the current version of the Plan. She said that study identified the locations of streams, marshes, glaciation, and overflow as they relate to important wildlife habitat areas. She said the reason for the deletion was not explained and it should be. Ms. Mendenhall urged that the Assembly consider the cumulative effects of development on wildlife and habitat in each area. She said the more development there is, the more it affects the wildlife. Ms. Mendenhall said that it was stated in Chapter 4 that the urban/rural boundary on the Land

Use Policy Map "mostly follows established settlement patterns." She pointed out that the fine print in the legend said it would not even be applied until the Hillside District Plan has been completed, but that is not explicitly stated anywhere in the text of the Plan, and she believed it should be. Ms. Mendenhall said the Hillside Wastewater Management Plan had also been deleted from the earlier version of the Anchorage 2020 Plan. Again, she said there was no explanation as to why it was deleted, nor any comment that it would be reincorporated into the Plan. She said Hillside Wastewater Management Plan, because it had recommended certain areas for R-3 zoning, guides hillside zoning decisions on a monthly basis. She said it guides development of sewer and water, and even developer requests to rezone are denied based on the Hillside Wastewater Management Plan's recommendation for R-3 or higher density zoning.

In response to Mr. Kendall, Ms. Mendenhall said Living With Wildlife in Anchorage: A Cooperative Planning Effort should be implemented in areas where it was determined wildlife habitat would be in the same vicinity as development. She said the Natural Open Space Plan was also deleted from the earlier version of the 2020 Plan, and she was aware that natural open space standards were on the drawing board in the strategies for Chapter 5. She said an appropriate strategy would be to identify which open spaces were the most important for wildlife corridors between the existing large tracts of open land. She responded that developers should consult with the Municipality and biologists to identify critical habitat areas, and the Municipality had the ability to require greenbelts to be incorporated into development tracts to protect and preserve those habitats. In response to Mr. Kendall's comment that the City did not have the resources to provide wildlife habitat studies or consulting expertise, Ms. Mendenhall pointed out that biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game who had contributed to Living With Wildlife in Anchorage: A Cooperative Planning Effort had the expertise and were paid by their agencies to provide consultation to the Municipality or anyone else who requested it. She added that retired professionals such as she also provided habitat consultation services on a volunteer basis.

Ms. Fairclough pointed out that a critical habitat map was defined in Living With Wildlife in Anchorage: A Cooperative Planning Effort and the City had access to it. However, it would have to be formally adopted for use in land management planning.

In response to Mr. Tesche, Ms. Mendenhall said she did not see that implementation of Living With Wildlife in Anchorage: A Cooperative Planning Effort or that anything in the Critical Habitat Map would substantially impede or hamper the construction of new or needed primary roads in the community. She said the Municipality should have a formal policy that included consideration of wildlife among the other requirements in its road-building and planning processes.

In response to Ms. Abney, Ms. Mendenhall said a master plan, providing contiguous corridors between neighborhoods, and district plans would be beneficial. She said it would give the residents of an area the opportunity to weigh the desirability of wildlife against other items of importance such as transportation and location of denser developments.

JOSE VICENTE said the Anchorage 2020 Plan provided general direction for future growth and mapped general patterns of development based on the best estimates of the future, and he fully supported the Plan. He said a good comprehensive plan must sacrifice the parochial interests of communities for the best interests and broader needs of the entire community, and he believed this Plan was well balanced in that regard. He said the Plan was needed to guide governments and developers in making important financial decisions, and once approved, the Plan must be followed. Mr. Vicente said large open spaces for development were not available any more, and future development in Anchorage would increasingly depend on more efficient use of existing infrastructure, vacant land infill, and the redevelopment of under-used and/or dilapidated properties in neighborhoods. It was his opinion there was a need for a public/private partnership for master planning of contiguous small parcels prior to development. He said it was impossible to provide an adequate plan for five-acre tracts of land, and the Municipality should have taken the initiative long ago in assisting property owners with the master planning of large areas and developing them accordingly. He said that partnership could be extended for the construction of infrastructure as was done in the 1970s with the construction of arterials and collectors, and he fully encouraged that this be done. Mr. Vicente provided the following specific comments regarding the Plan: (1) With respect to storm drain issues on page 98, one item mentioned use of undeveloped lands for storm water retention, and he recommended adding the words to the end of the sentence, "and/or detention." (2) Under the item, "Improve the road maintenance practice to reduce runoff pollution," he encouraged the Assembly to add at the end of that sentence "and emphasize road sweeping." (3) Under Land Acquisition for Water Quality Treatment Facilities, Mr. Vicente recommended adding the words "and use of Municipal and State lands for the same purposes." (4) Under Water Issue, he suggested adding "Extension of water system to the hillside to ensure adequate fire protection," and he recommended development of criteria by which hillside property owners would pay for the benefit. (5) Under Public Improvements and Services, he suggested adding the following: "Locate elementary schools either within residential neighborhoods or adjacent to residential collector streets. (6) Under the seven key planning issues listed in the Preferred Scenario on page 45, Mr. Vicente said he agreed with the comments on downtown and midtown, and he encouraged mixed use structures in downtown. With respect to the Anchorage International Airport, Mr. Vicente reiterated that parochial interests should be subordinated to the important needs of the community, and he believed the Comp Plan provided a balanced approach. Mr. Vicente said he strongly sympathized with Issue 5, Infill and Redevelopment. He said a redevelopment board should be created to implement redevelopment criteria and handle and guide redevelopment issues. Mr. Vicente said he hoped this would be the last time there would be a Comprehensive Plan strictly for the Anchorage Bowl. He said Anchorage has grown, and the next Comprehensive Plan should include the Matanuska-Susitna Valley as well as everything from Girdwood to Chugiak.

Ms. Clementson noted that they try to locate elementary schools within neighborhoods because the population served is students who walk to school. She said the Assembly has traditionally taken into consideration what kind of roads surround the proposed location for an elementary school, how the children will get to school, and whether they will have to cross any major streets. However, as they are running out of room and the required site size for an elementary school is 15 acres, their choices are becoming more limited, and hence, their decisions necessarily include more compromises.

Mr. Vicente pointed out that two to three more elementary schools will soon be needed in Eagle River/Chugiak, and the time to take action to purchase those sites is now so they will not have to limit their choices and compromise on safety factors.

Ms. Clementson said they were currently in the process of selecting a site for an elementary school in Eagle River, and they were reviewing the overall picture of growth projections for Eagle River to determine where additional elementary school sites would be needed in the future.

BONNIE NELSON said she was a 30-year resident of Chugiak, and she was speaking on behalf of the elderly residents at the Chugiak Senior Center as well as many of the disabled people who use Anchor Rides. She expressed their concern regarding the lack of adequate public transportation for the community's elderly and handicapped people. Ms. Nelson said she had had the opportunity to be a pedestrian, a driver, and a wheelchair user for her modes of transportation, and the experience of being mobile, immobile, and housebound. She wished the Comp Plan provided for more public transit studies, and that more people in the Municipality focused on this problem. She said the elderly and disabled would like to become more mobile and have the opportunity to become more involved in the community. She stated that even if Anchorage has the best public transit plan in the world, if the tax cap passes, we would be unable to implement it. She said property taxes were a burden on many people, especially the elderly, but they were willing to pay them in order to have the benefit of the services taxes provide. Ms. Nelson encouraged looking into implementing other kinds of taxes and providing incentives for people to work. She said if the People Mover budget was cut again, Chugiak residents had been advised that Anchor Rides would no longer be available to their community. She said this would have a significant adverse impact on the seniors and disabled as many would be totally without transportation and unable to get to work or to medical appointments. Ms. Nelson said it would be advisable to have a group of people whose task it was to focus on and address ADA compliance and related issues. She pointed out that it was very costly to change or upgrade a completed project to bring it into compliance.

In response to Ms. Nelson, Chair Von Gemmingen said Elayne Janiak of Transit Works, a public ad hoc group, had spoken on disability and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) issues with respect to transportation projects at an earlier Assembly public hearing on transportation issues.

Ms. Nelson suggested that they would save money in the long run if they implemented a department within the Municipality to address and oversee ADA issues as they relate to public transportation and construction projects.

TONI JONES, a Planning and Zoning Commission member, said she was speaking as an individual. She recommended the Assembly pause and take a long look at coming up with a Plan that would meet the needs of the community at the macro level for a lengthy period of time. She said although the document was called the 2020 Plan, it would, in reality, be a work in progress and refined over time, especially as the implementation phase begins. Ms. Jones said she hoped the Plan that was ultimately adopted would be one that gave the city a good, running start for the next five to ten years. She said she had been involved with this version of the Plan for the past three years, and she knew people who were involved for a couple of years prior to that. So it was a lengthy planning process, and the community had spent a lot of time and money, in human resources as well as financial resources, researching and compiling the information for development of the 2020 Plan. Ms. Jones said she had watched from home the hearings that she had not been able to attend in person, and she was pleased with the questions asked by the Assembly members. She asked that the Assembly review the materials they had received, both the P&Z comments and suggestions as well as the public testimony, in making their decision on of the Anchorage 2020 Plan. She was very impressed with the number of meetings and work sessions the Assembly had committed to the purpose of receiving public comments on the Comp Plan. She said she had children and grandchildren, and felt she had a vested interest in the direction of the community over the next 20 to 30 years. She expressed her appreciation to the Assembly for its diligence on this issue.

In response to Ms. Abney, Ms. Jones said they should create a framework to support responsible and realistic development in the future. She said trends such as housing, schools and services will be market driven in the future. Ms. Jones hoped the Comp Plan would create the framework that would provide a balance for healthy communities and provide tools to make Anchorage an attractive place for people to live and locate. Ms. Jones said she had experience in job recruiting, and what Anchorage was able to offer to attract skilled and professional people into its job market was lifestyle. If Anchorage is not able to deliver the expected kind of community, it will not draw people. In response to Ms. Abney's question regarding how to provide for recreation, transportation, housing, and facilities in the Comp Plan, Ms. Jones said she was not sure they could get very specific at the Comp Plan level with respect to the implementation stage of those issues. She said goals, objectives, and broad policies that stress the importance of providing opportunities for everyone, in all sectors of the community, should be included in the Comp Plan. She said that would form the framework, and then the next level, i.e., a neighborhood or a Municipal department level, could be responsible for developing a more specific plan for implementation.

In response to Mr. Tesche, Ms. Jones said her opinion was that there was not adequate staff nor sufficient contract resources to implement the 2020 Plan if approved. She felt there would be a need to realign Municipal departments, hire additional staff, and/or secure funding to procure the services of consultants to effect the implementation of the 2020 Plan. She said Craig Campbell, Office of Planning, Development and Public Works Director, and Sue Fison, Acting Director of Planning, were more qualified to respond to this question, but that was her assessment of the situation. She said once the Plan and the timeline for implementation were adopted, they should begin to assess what steps to take to begin the implementation process, and explore potential funding sources. She said it was P&Z's responsibility to make recommendations as to what should be included in the Plan, but it was the Assembly's responsibility to prioritize those items. Ms. Jones responded to Mr. Tesche that she, along with others, felt Title 21 was due for revision, but she was not sure if the Municipal Law Department would have the capacity to undertake the project. She said they may find it necessary and/or advantageous to procure contract assistance if it was going to be a major overhaul or to coordinate the revision of the various sections of Title 21 among different departments.

In response to Ms. Abney, Ms. Jones said it was recognized that once the Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan was adopted, some sections of Title 21 would have to be revised before the Plan could be implemented. In response to Ms. Abney's question regarding the P&Z's ability to make recommendations to the Assembly regarding the changes that need to be made to Title 21, Ms. Jones said she could not commit on behalf of the entire Planning and Zoning Commission, but as an individual Commissioner, she felt the P&Z would welcome the opportunity to assist the Assembly in that manner. She suggested that when the time came, the Assembly request the P&Z's assistance with revision of Title 21 through Ms. Fison.

Ms. Fairclough suggested incorporating the Tischler and Associates' report on the implementation of the Comp Plan as an extra credit project for Ms. Jones' sociology class. She said this would be an excellent way for people to educate themselves on the Comp Plan and its importance to the community. She briefly paraphrased the conclusion of the report, stating that it would be costly no matter which choice was implemented because the revenue base upon which the City of Anchorage operates is flawed. Ms. Fairclough said the Assembly would appreciate class members' perspectives on the issue. Ms. Fairclough said the Tischler report was posted on the Municipal Web site, and there were paper copies available as well.

TERRY BIXLER said she was new to Eagle River and she would like to provide a newcomer's perspective and observations. She said the roads do not accommodate the population of Eagle River, are full of potholes, the center and side lines are difficult to see or nonexistent, and there are no lights along the highway, which she pointed out is very dangerous. Ms. Bixler said she moved here from New Mexico, where there was no snow, and it is not dark there like it is here. She asked if this was a situation that was in the works to be remedied at some point.

Ms. Fairclough said the Glenn Highway was State operated, not Municipal operated. She said they were aware of the problems, and the Municipality works in conjunction with the State through the AMATS process to address the issues. Ms. Fairclough said upgrades were projected for the Old Glenn Highway in 2003 or 2004. She added that they have a different level of service in Chugiak, and maintenance from Chugiak to Anchorage was paid for differently than how Anchorage pays for its road maintenance. She said they have previously asked for a mill rate increase so a higher level of service could be offered, but the voters had rejected that request. Ms. Fairclough explained the community councils forum to Ms. Bixler and advised that the one for the area in which Ms. Bixler lived was the Eagle River Valley Community Council. She said they meet above Garcia's, Bill Coleman was the council President, and Gail Dial was the representative of the Road Board.

Mr. Tesche advised Ms. Bixler that a statewide tax cap was a current State ballot issue which would be coming up for vote on November 7. He explained that if passed, it would have a dramatic negative impact on the services that are currently provided in the community, and among them, significantly reduced road maintenance services.

SETH TEWA, Anchorage resident, said for two years he had lived in Hungary, a country that was under Communist suppression for the past 40 years. The democratic process he had witnessed at tonight's meeting was an inspiration. He thanked the Assembly members for the service they provide for their communities. Mr. Tewa said he was a 23 year-old college student who did not understand the Plan, but did understand the process and the Assembly members' roles as leaders. He urged the Assembly members to keep public trust in mind as they carry out their day-to-day activities, so that nothing was done to cause constituent distrust, complaint, or criticism of our elected representatives. Mr. Tewa said it would be unreasonable to expect that every single issue would be addressed, met, and satisfied by the Assembly because government could not provide everything to everyone all of the time. He said when individual members of the community get involved and give of their own time, then they will see more issues resolved more in line with their own wishes.

Ms. Clementson commented that Mr. Tewa was a remarkable young man. She said in all of the issues they deal with on a daily basis, it was sometimes easy to lose focus and perspective. She thanked Mr. Tewa, and said he would be an excellent candidate to speak to some of the high school government classes, to motivate people, and make them see that they can make a difference in their community. She said that was why most of the Assembly members had gotten involved in local issues and city government in the first place, was because Anchorage was a place that was different, and they realized that each citizen could make a difference.

JOHN ALCANTRA, lifelong Alaska resident, complimented Mr. Tewa on his eloquent comments. In response to Ms. Clementson's suggestion that Mr. Tewa would be a good candidate to speak before high school classes, Mr. Alcantra said he would be a good candidate to go door to door to educate the uninformed citizens of our community on the importance of community involvement. Mr. Alcantra said he had previously been a Kenai Peninsula Borough resident, and before that, a Matanuska-Susitna Borough resident. He said he had been an Eagle River resident for five days now. Mr. Alcantra reiterated the earlier suggestion that the Anchorage Comprehensive Plan be integrated with that of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, possibly to one day become the Tri-Borough Area Plan. With respect to Ms. Bixler's comments regarding the need for road improvements in Eagle River, Mr. Alcantra noted that a representative from Soldotna, Gary Davis, had recently been named the Road Service Area Director for the Kenai Peninsula Borough, and he asked if a similar position existed within the Municipality of Anchorage.

Chair Von Gemmingen said Craig Campbell's position as the Office of Planning, Development and Public Works Director would be the equivalent of the Road Service Area Director for the Kenai Peninsula Borough.

At Chair Von Gemmingen's request, Mr. Campbell briefly described the Street Maintenance Section of the Public Works Department.

In response to Mr. Alcantra's question, someone responded that the road service area mill rate for Chugiak/Eagle River was 1.1 mills, and half of that was dedicated to capital projects. Chair Von Gemmingen added that the mill rate for the Anchorage roads and drainage service area was 3.3.

Mr. Alcantra commended the Assembly on their efforts on the Anchorage 2020 Plan. He said they would have a good turnout for the Girdwood meeting the next evening.

With respect to the integration of an Anchorage and Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Plan, Mr. Tesche noted the Anchorage Assembly was scheduled to hold a joint session with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough in early November. He invited Mr. Alcantra and Mr. Vicente, who had earlier commented on this topic, to provide additional comments.

Mr. Sullivan advised that Mr. Alcantra had been the Disaster Coordinator for the Kenai Peninsula Borough for the past three and a half years. He noted that Mr. Vicente, in his earlier comments, had mentioned fire protection for the hillside, and he invited Mr. Alcantra to specifically address in his written comments his views on areas of the Plan that address hillside safety, as well as other safety issues that may be appropriate to include in the Plan.

Mr. Alcantra responded that Anchorage had a good Emergency Management Director in Bob Stewart. He said there was a tremendous access and egress problem on the hillside, as there was in the lower Kenai Peninsula and Homer, and he hoped it would be addressed by the fire department and emergency management staff.

Mr. Kendall asked that when Mr. Alcantra addressed the hillside issue, he include the Chugiak/Eagle River hillsides in his comments on fire concerns.

Mr. Alcantra noted that he had observed that the density was not as severe on Eagle River Road as it was in parts of the hillside. He said hazard mitigation, debris and tree removal, as well as access and egress were areas that he would address with respect to the hillside fire protection issue.

In response to Mr. Alcantra, Ms. Fairclough said he was in the Eagle River Community Council area, and she and Mr. Kendall were his Assembly representatives.

Chair Von Gemmingen asked if anyone else wished to speak. There was no one.

Chair Von Gemmingen said the Assembly looked forward to seeing students at their meetings in the future. She thanked the Anchorage School District Technician who taped the meeting this evening. Chair Von Gemmingen noted that the next meeting on the Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan would be held in Girdwood tomorrow night, and the regular Assembly meeting of September 26 would be the final public hearing date on the Comprehensive Plan.

**4. ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

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Chair

ATTEST:

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Municipal Clerk

Date Minutes Approved: January 9, 2001

LF/ccarl