

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY

Minutes for Special Meeting of September 14, 2000

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was convened at 7:10 p.m. by Assembly Chair Fay Von Gemmingen in the Prince Court, Westin Alyeska Prince Hotel, 1000 Arlberg Avenue, Girdwood, Alaska.

Chair Von Gemmingen welcomed the public and Ken Asuna from the Turnagain Times, and noted that staff were assisting those who wished to sign up to provide public comment. Chair Von Gemmingen also advised that the Assembly meeting was being carried on radio station KEUL, 88.9, this evening. She asked the members of the Assembly to introduce themselves at this time.

2. ROLL CALL:

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

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, Ordinance No. AO 2000-119 - Anchorage 2020 Supplemental Information, Community Planning and Development.
- (CONTINUED FROM 7-25-00, 8-15-00, 8-23-00, 8-29-00, 9-12-00, AND 9-13-00)

4. NEW PUBLIC HEARING:

- A. **FIRST PUBLIC HEARING:** Ordinance No. AO 2000-124, an ordinance **adopting the Girdwood Commercial Areas and Transportation Master Plan** as an element of the Anchorage Comprehensive Plan and amending Chapter 21.05 of the Anchorage Municipal Code(Girdwood) (Planning and Zoning Commission Case 2000-032), Community Planning and Development.
1. Assembly Memorandum No. AM 742-2000.

Mr. Tesche moved, to combine the public hearings for AO 2000-119 and
seconded by Ms. Fairclough, AO 2000-124.
and it passed with one
objection by Ms. Abney,

Mr. Tremaine noted the Girdwood Board of Supervisors had requested separate public hearings on these two ordinances. He said he would pose no objection to having the two hearings combined if there would be little testimony on AO 2000-119.

Chair Von Gemmingen said time would be extended as a courtesy for those who wished to comment on the Anchorage 2020 Plan in addition to AO 2000-124, the Girdwood Plan.

Mr. Tremaine advised that Assembly Member Hudson had been a member of the Borough Assembly prior to unification.

Chair Von Gemmingen added she had also been a City Council member at that time.

Mr. Tremaine said Ms. Hudson, therefore had a great deal of knowledge regarding the history that was important when discussing service area issues.

Chair Von Gemmingen opened the public hearing for AO 2000-119 and AO 2000-124 and asked if anyone wished to speak.

JOHN GALLUP thanked the Assembly members for coming to Girdwood. He said the Transportation Master Plan was very important to Girdwood, and the team had assembled a great group of planners from Colorado who had become knowledgeable about conditions peculiar to Alaska and some of the unique problems this State faces. Mr. Gallup said he had participated in most of the Transportation Master Plan meetings, and it had become obvious early on that one faction of Girdwood residents wanted a rail spur in the Valley. However, it had been strongly opposed by the majority of the residents. He said although they thought the issue had died a quiet death, Governor Sheffield's earlier comments indicated a rail spur in the Valley was a "done deal," and it would happen fairly quickly. Mr. Gallup said the Transportation Plan before the Assembly reflected a favorable viewpoint toward the rail spur, but the Land Use Committee had taken a poll to determine the wishes of the community, and 84 percent had voted against it. He said this had been an emotional issue, but he felt Girdwood residents did not want a rail spur, now or at any time in the near future. On a personal level, he said he did not want the rail spur. He did not want to hear it or have to see the right-of-way, and he did not want to lose the beautiful stretch of trail in the Glacier Creek vicinity. Mr. Gallup also said he did not believe the East Side collector road should be built, and it certainly

should never be Timberline Drive as Timberline was never designed for that. Mr. Gallup said he liked the fact that access to his home was difficult because it precluded noise and high-speed traffic.

TOM YEAGER said he was a former member of the Girdwood Board of Supervisors and had been a member of the Citizens Advisory Board that was convened during the drafting of the Turnagain Arm Management Plan and the Girdwood Area Plan. He said he currently serves on the Executive Committee for the Girdwood 2020 Plan. Mr. Yeager said for a community the size of Girdwood, there was no shortage of controversial issues, and the rail spur was one of them. He said as ongoing debates go, this issue appeared to be a classic example of the standard conflict between pro-development and pro-environment factions. However, in his view this was absolutely incorrect. He said in the final analysis, Girdwood residents all want the same thing, to preserve and enhance their quality of life and to protect the environment. He said where the factions differed was in their view of how these objectives could best be achieved. Mr. Yeager said the fundamental challenge facing the community was how to respond to the inevitability of change in a manner that maximizes residents' ability to protect the environment and preserve their way of life. Mr. Yeager said it was his belief and hope that as the community grows and there are more opportunities to work through the issues thoroughly and objectively, there will be increasing support for continued evolution into a truly sustainable mountain resort community, which would encourage additional support for projects like the spur which would in turn contribute to the evolutionary process. Mr. Yeager said future Girdwoodians may view the rail spur as the best option available for slowing the increase of highway traffic into the Valley. He thanked the Assembly members for coming to Girdwood.

ERIN BASHAW stated that according to Alaska State Trooper reports, since the hotel opened six years ago, Alyeska Highway had seen an overwhelming increase in traffic volume and violations. She said those conditions had worsened when the speed limit was increased to 65 miles per hour on the Seward Highway. She noted that since the Troopers had stopped patrolling the Hillside, Troopers assigned to the Seward Highway area were reduced from 23 to 4 Troopers, and Girdwood had lost its only designated Trooper. Ms. Bashaw said the Alyeska Highway had become a residential road, with residential driveways every 50 to 100 feet, and it was not appropriate for use as a commercial thoroughfare. She noted the increases in traffic volume and violations were primarily due to Valley recreation and development, which attracts thousands of users -- visitors, service delivery vehicles, semi-trucks and trailers, and contractor equipment, whose drivers do not observe speed limits. She said mass transportation was essential for Girdwood, and visitors should be required to utilize whatever transportation system was developed. She said making the mass transportation system optional would not work. She pointed out that even the Plan stated the rail spur would not be used. Ms. Bashaw implored the Assembly to develop Girdwood as Anchorage's jewel, not as its recreational cesspool. She said they should have learned from history that individual cars do not work in mountain communities, but mass transit does. She said it helps to maintain the community; lowers traffic, noise, and air pollution; and reduces traffic volume and violations. Ms. Bashaw suggested a local source of revenue funded by the thousands of visitors and recreational users of the Valley. In closing, Ms. Bashaw said the question was not what kind of mass transit system should be implemented, because any would help. The issue was requiring the use of whatever mass transit system was implemented in the Valley, and that requirement was missing from the Plan.

RICHARD DRAKE said the term "resort community" in the Master Plan should be changed to "recreation-based community" because there are many recreational opportunities in the Valley that are not related to a "resort." However, he said Girdwood was also considered a multi-use mountain community. He said some Girdwood residents do commute to Anchorage, but there were many residents who lived and worked in Girdwood who have nothing to do with recreation or the resort. Therefore, any transportation plan would have to take into consideration all those aspects, and one that does not would be a poor choice. With respect to the rail spur, Mr. Drake said he felt the proposal was lopsided and does not meet the user needs of the entire community. The proposed route for the rail spur would also cut across a portion of the Valley that he thought would be inappropriate. Mr. Drake proposed the following as a simple guideline for Valley development: designate the area from the airport toward the Seward Highway as the quiet area, and the area from the airport toward the end of the Valley as the quieter area.

JIM JANSSEN said the reality of the proposed rail spur was that even the Master Plan said it would not be used. Commuters would not use it because it would take an additional 20 minutes each way from the mouth of the Valley to the hotel. Tired arriving tourists would not use it because they would not want to wait four more hours to take a slow train to Alyeska Resort. Skiers would not use it because if the fare was \$7.00 each way, it would cost a family of four \$56.00, as opposed to approximately \$10.00 in gas, for transportation to go skiing at Alyeska. None of the tour companies have expressed interest in the rail spur as part of their scheduled transportation. He said the rail spur was just not a viable, practical alternative. In addition, he said no one had commented regarding the hydrological impact that the rail spur would have on the hillside. Mr. Janssen said right now, there is a large buffer zone that catches the runoff from rainfalls, but if the rail spur is built in that area, the buffer zone would be damaged, and flooding would result, with a good likelihood that part of the Alyeska Highway would be wiped out in the event of a heavy rainfall. If this happened, property owners would have no recourse but litigation and/or applying for federal or state emergency funding to recoup the cost of damage to their property.

MARY JO THILL thanked the Assembly members for coming to Girdwood. She asked that in their review of the transportation portion of the Plan, the Assembly keep in mind that they are planning for the next 20 to 50 years in Girdwood. She pointed out that if the rail spur corridor was not at least put in place now, the option to build a rail spur in the future would be foreclosed, and traffic in the Valley would become impossible to deal with. She asked that everyone at least keep an open mind and keep the rail spur corridor in the Plan. She said it was not something that was going to happen tomorrow, but it would be available to implement should it become a practical solution in the future. She said several studies would have to be conducted prior to constructing the rail spur, so leaving the corridor in the plan would be the prudent thing to do in case it was determined in the future that it would be beneficial to the community.

LANA JOHNSON said a second train would stop in Girdwood on Saturday to pick up a few people, including herself, to take some State legislators to Seward to discuss the future of the cruise ship industry. She said 275,000 cruise ship passengers had crossed the Gulf this year, and more were anticipated in the years ahead. Ms. Johnson said she was a member of the original advisory committee that had invested over a year of its time to lay the framework that led to the Transportation Plan before the Assembly this evening. She said she was also a 30-year resident of Anchorage and had owned property in Girdwood for 10 years. Ms. Johnson said much had been made of last December's sham vote of bringing a rail service to the Valley. She said she used the word "sham" because the ballot language was totally misleading. In addition, there were no formal voter

rolls, no checks and balances, and no security. She pointed out that Anchorage residents who owned property in Girdwood did not vote; therefore, 55 percent of Girdwood property owners had been disenfranchised. So the December advisory vote had not only been misleading, but totally meaningless. Ms. Johnson said that as a Girdwood 2020 member, she had been requested to coordinate a research project last spring regarding Anchorage's attitude toward Girdwood and its future. She found that: (1) By a huge margin, Anchorage residents share an extraordinarily unified vision for Girdwood, and they want to maintain Girdwood's unique environment while proceeding on development of a four-season resort, complete with expansion into Glacier and Winter Creeks. (2) Over 80 percent of Anchorage residents want a wide range of recreational opportunities in Girdwood. (3) Anchorage residents view Girdwood as a destination, not just another neighborhood. She added that her research had found that Anchorage residents visit Girdwood an average of nine times and two nights each year. Ms. Johnson provided additional statistical information from her research and stated these were the real levels of support based on scientific samples.

JEREMY CERUTTI said he and his family had lived in Girdwood for four and a half years. He expressed strong opposition to the proposed rail spur in the Valley. He said the only entities that would benefit from the spur would be the Alyeska Prince Hotel and the Alaska Railroad. He pointed out the spur did not have community support and did not provide a reasonable transportation alternative for the people who live in Girdwood. A shuttle or trolley would be a more logical, efficient, and cost-effective method of public transit within the Valley. He said a rail spur would not help local business, could not transport people within Girdwood, and would not be used by many local residents. He said although supporters have stated it would be used by commuters and visitors, he pointed out that a train depot currently exists in Girdwood, and it is not used extensively at this time. He said the cost of \$4.5 to \$6.5 million per mile for a rail spur that would not serve the needs of the community but would only benefit corporate entities would be a waste of taxpayer dollars. Mr. Cerutti pointed out this plan had never received community support, and he felt the Alyeska Prince Hotel and the Alaska Railroad should respect the voice of the community. He said this community shared its ideals for the future, and the impact of a rail spur in the Girdwood Valley would conflict with those ideals. He said the Girdwood transit objectives would best be met by a shuttle bus system in combination with rail service on existing track. He asked that the Assembly listen to the will of the people, respect and represent the will of the people, and serve the people by deleting the rail spur corridor and implementing a system that would serve the community's needs.

DEBBIE DAVIS voiced her objection to spending \$50 million in taxpayer dollars for a project that would not benefit the Girdwood community or its residents.

BROOKS CHANDLER, Chair of the Girdwood Board of Supervisors, said his written comments on the merits of the rail spur could be found at pages 89 through 96 of the attachment to the ordinance. He said if he attempted to summarize those comments in one word, it would be "boondoggle," which he said was defined in the dictionary as "a project funded by the government out of political favoritism that is of no real value to the community." He supplemented that definition by adding "and something that the community does not want." Mr. Chandler said the reason this project was of no real value to the community was because the people responsible for trying to push it through did not respect the community values that Girdwood residents have expressed in the past and will continue to express in the future. He added that these community values had also been expressed in a public vote and in a series of meetings that have been held over the past several years on the issue. Mr. Chandler said shortly after the vote on the rail spur issue was conducted in Girdwood last December, the President of the Alaska Railroad had been quoted in the newspaper as saying he thought the community of Girdwood was made up of confused people, and that he did not feel their vote was worth much. Mr. Chandler said he trusted the Assembly members would not display the same arrogance and contempt for the residents of the Girdwood community as the President of the Alaska Railroad had throughout the process. He said he hoped the Assembly would take into consideration that the Girdwood residents knew what they wanted and why they wanted it, and he hoped the Assembly would evaluate the very specific objections and analyses that Girdwood residents have made throughout the course of the public process on the rail spur issue.

Ms. Clementson commented that in her seven and a half years on the Assembly she had never received as many phone calls from such a well-educated, well-informed group of people as she had from the residents of Girdwood. She said when a controversial issue arises, the residents who have called her have spoken in an informed manner and directly to the issue no matter which side of it they were on. She said that speaks very highly of the community. In response to Ms. Clementson, Mr. Chandler said another member of the Board of Supervisors had been designated to address the remainder of the Plan.

MIKE MURPHY thanked the Assembly for coming and giving the residents of Girdwood the opportunity to be heard. He said he had a detailed speech all prepared, but his comments had been covered by earlier speakers, and he had given the same speech last time, so he was sure the Assembly had heard it all before. He said he wasn't surprised if the Assembly didn't remember his speech because it seemed everything the Girdwood residents have been saying throughout the process has been falling on deaf ears. He said after all the comment and the advisory vote against it, the fact that the rail spur was still being seriously considered meant something was wrong, and that was the reason he had come tonight. He said the Assembly was aware that the majority of Girdwood residents are strongly opposed to laying rail through the Valley. He said all the arguments against the rail aside, the real question was, does it matter that Girdwood residents do not want it. Mr. Murphy said the feeling throughout the community that the rail was going through regardless has resulted in a community cynicism akin to that on the national level and was the reason people do not bother to vote any more, because it just doesn't matter. He said if the Assembly approved a Master Plan that included the rail spur, despite the strong community opposition to it, he felt the Assembly should be ashamed of themselves for their lack of integrity and leadership in representing the views and the voices of the community.

Mr. Tesche assured Mr. Murphy that his voice and his vote count. He said Mr. Murphy's passionate comments were appropriate for anyone who was trying to protect their way of life and their neighborhood, and he was glad Mr. Murphy and so many of his neighbors had come to provide their comments at tonight's meeting.

BILL DONOHUE said he was the Chairman of the Girdwood Land Use Committee, the group that had conducted what had been characterized as the "sham" vote. He thanked the Assembly members for coming to Girdwood. Mr. Donohue described how the vote had been conducted, and he presented the form voters had to sign when they came to vote. He said their vote was just like the elections held to elect members of the Assembly. Mr. Donohue said the Land Use Committee meets every

month, and every resident, property owner, business owner, and nonprofit organization in Girdwood was considered a member of the Girdwood Land Use Committee and was entitled to vote on all issues, and people are actively encouraged to attend.

JULIE JONAS spoke on behalf of the Girdwood Board of Supervisors. She thanked the Assembly for coming tonight. Directing the Assembly to the Board of Supervisors' written comments in the yellow packet at pages 68 through 80, she said they provided, in detail, the Board's broad recommendations and specific amendments to the Master Plan.. Ms. Jonas asked that the Assembly read the comments before taking action on the Master Plan. She said the Planning Department had used the Board's recommendations as a basis for the analysis they had submitted to the Planning and Zoning (P&Z) Commission, which resulted in the amendments to the Plan that were currently before the Assembly. She said while P&Z had accepted most of the Board's minor suggestions, they had disagreed with the Board on the issue of the rail spur, which was the most controversial issue in the Plan. Ms. Jonas said the Board of Supervisors had unanimously voted at its regularly scheduled meeting of January 17, 2000, to endorse the overall Plan with the exception of the recommendation for a rail spur through the Valley. She said many people participated in the formulation of the plans, and they felt the Commercial Area section of the Plan was generally well supported. However, the Transportation section needed some fine-tuning, and they had provided suggested changes. Ms. Jonas said the Girdwood Board of Supervisors advocated the development of a Valley entry multi-modal center, shifting its priority ahead of the rail spur. She said an areawide shuttle system, in conjunction with the current and future road infrastructure, and coupled with improved commuter rail service between Anchorage and Girdwood should be the priority. She said the Board urged the Municipality to work with them in discussing options other than a rail spur, primarily because they welcomed the opportunity to improve rail service that would meet the mass transit needs of residents, commuters, skiers, and other visitors to Girdwood without a rail spur through the Valley. She said on page 91 of the draft Plan, the rail spur was listed under the "To Do Immediately" section, and the Board requested that the Plan be amended to delete "immediate construction" of the rail spur .

Speaking as a Girdwood resident and homeowner, Ms. Jonas said she had first heard mention of the rail spur at a Board of Supervisors meeting she had attended in April 1997. She was not on the Board at that time, but since that time, she had attended over 20 public meetings on the issue of the rail spur, with 10 to 80 people in attendance at each of those meetings. She said she felt confident she knew where the people in the community stood on the issue. Ms. Jonas said she had supported the December 1999 vote on the issue so they could have a sense of where the broader community stood. She said she had facilitated a successful informational meeting prior to the vote, and the meeting was well publicized and well attended. However, the outcome of the vote, as described earlier, did not surprise her. Ms. Jonas said she had also traced the congressional record on the funding for the Federal Transit Administration's New Start grant in the amount of \$10 million received by the Railroad last fall, and she had made phone calls to Washington, D.C., to verify how the process worked. She said as the Mayor had stated in the Compass article in the newspaper this past week, Girdwood had participated in the process and has spoken, and she, for one, was counting on the Assembly to listen.

At Chair Von Gemmingen's request, Ms. Jonas introduced other Girdwood Board of Supervisors members, including Bill Schwartz and Norman Starkey, who were present in the audience, and noted member Elizabeth Wilson, was not present

CINDY NIELSEN said Girdwood may be small in population, but the residents love where they live, and they are not afraid to speak out. Ms. Nielsen said they had requested that Municipal bus service be extended to Girdwood. She said Municipal bus service had been extended all the way to Chugiak north of Anchorage, and that area has been served for the past 20 years, but Girdwood was still waiting. She said Municipal bus service to Girdwood would provide faster service than train service and would offer more destination options in Anchorage. She said the Girdwood community had not asked for a rail spur. She said Seibu Alyeska had asked for the rail spur. She said they were only one private business in the area, and it appeared they were being given preferential treatment. She pointed out that her property taxes had nearly doubled in 20 years while Seibu's were cut in half shortly after the new hotel went into operation. In addition, Municipal records reflect that Seibu was given a bargain basement price on the land where the hotel is located. She said while it was true Seibu has spent plenty of money on infrastructures to develop the land, so had all the homeowners who had built homes in the community. Ms. Nielsen said she hoped all issues would be carefully considered before the Assembly's vote in two weeks. She noted that the corridor route for the spur crossed seven avalanche paths. She asked who would be responsible if an avalanche took out a train full of tourists destined for Alyeska Resort. She added that not only would the proposed corridor displace almost all of the existing trails, it would also cross two creeks that have a tendency to flood. She asked if their small community really needed to incur these risks. She pointed out there were faster ways to get to and from Girdwood than a train, and it would never be an efficient mode of transportation for their community.

GEORGE HANSON said P&Z had not taken into account the wishes of the Girdwood community. He said according to the charter, Girdwood had a right to a locally directed ongoing planning process that is based on the community's goals, objectives, and policies for the future. He said this has not been a locally directed plan, either for the transportation or the commercial areas plan. Mr. Hanson said most of the Girdwood residents were opposed to many of the statements in the Plan, one of which was the 25-foot building height requirement. He said both the old and new Girdwood commercial areas were in a flood plain area, and residents should have more of a locally directed voice on the planning for their community. Mr. Hanson said the average lot size in Alaska, the largest state, is 8,400 square feet, while the smallest state, Rhode Island, has the largest lot size of two acres. He said it was appalling that the federal government held so much of Alaska's land . With respect to Title 22, Mr. Hanson noted only one person at their local Land Use Committee meeting had been in favor of it, while most of the long-time residents of Girdwood were totally opposed to it. He said he agreed with the community in their opposition to the rail spur, but things can change over the years, so they should establish a corridor for it. He said the corridor could always be used for something else if they never decided to implement the rail spur, but if it was included in the Plan now, it would be available for use in the future if needed.

SAM E. DANIEL said he was a 30-year resident of Alaska, 14 of which have been in Girdwood. He said he has three children still in the school system, and he was involved in the community education program for a number of years, serving first in Seward, then Anchorage, and in Girdwood for about seven years. He said one of the things that is stressed in community education is process, community involvement, and ensuring that residents feel ownership for the things that happen in their communities. Mr. Daniel said he was involved in the formulation of the Girdwood Area Plan several years ago, and what he consistently heard throughout that process was that Girdwood residents valued outdoor recreation activities

such as skiing, hiking , biking, dog sledding, walking, and paragliding. They enjoyed their small-town atmosphere and the fact that everyone knows everyone else in the community. He said from day one, the community has been asked for their opinions, suggestions, and input, and the community had rallied and had worked diligently to define their desires and advocate them to whichever faction was soliciting at the time. Despite that fact, the rail spur seems to be poised to happen even though the residents of the community have made it crystal clear that they do not want it. He said there were factions on the other side of the coin that would bring it about if they could. He asked the Assembly to think about whether they would like to see this project constructed in their own back yard. He asked the Assembly to reject the portion of the Transportation Plan that would implement a rail spur in Girdwood.

GABRIELL BARNETT said she was one of the many Girdwood residents who was opposed to the rail spur, basically because it does not serve her needs or the needs of most Girdwood residents. Ms. Barnett said this issue was about a rail spur and Girdwood's ability to have a voice in its own future. She said it was an incredible testament to Girdwood residents and their willingness to keep trying that so many people had attended tonight's meeting and provided comment at yet another public hearing on the issue. She pointed out that this issue had been ongoing for years, and interest normally eventually dies out on one issue as other issues arise. But once again they had turned out in force for yet another public hearing on the rail spur issue. Ms. Barnett said she had been quite active on this issue herself and had advocated for others to educate and inform themselves, attend the meetings, and speak out on the issue . She said after a time, you start to question whether it's really worth it, but she was hopeful that if they informed and educated themselves, if they were reasonable, if they kept attending the public hearings and speaking out, that the Assembly would listen to them and understand how important this issue was to the residents of Girdwood. On her second point, Ms. Barnett said that to put the rail spur in context of the overall plan, she felt the consultants had done a very good job on most of the Commercial and Transportation Plan, but the fact that the rail spur seemed to dominate the entire section was very frustrating to her. She said it was as if they could not get past that issue to look at sensible alternatives. She said the consultants had not done a cost and benefits analysis of bus service vis-a-vis train service because they were consumed with the rail spur concept. Ms. Barnett said the community does have serious transportation problems, and they need to be addressed. She said it would be a tragedy if the rail spur concept dominates the picture to the extent of excluding discussion and resolution of the community's transportation needs. She said she did not have statistics, but when she had discussed this issue with her acquaintances from Anchorage, she had found them to be alarmingly misinformed regarding what the rail spur project would entail. She said it was as if they had fantasized the ideal scenario and thought it sounded like a great idea, but they had no idea what the limitations and down sides of the train service involved. When they found out, she felt, they would opt to hop in their personal vehicles for travel to Girdwood for recreation.

SUSAN PARRY said she was a 25-year resident of Alaska and had lived in the Valley for 11 years. Ms. Parry said she always votes, she would be voting in November, and she had voted against the spur. She said she would not use it, and she did not want it. It was for the resort and would not benefit the people in the Valley. She said the tax cap issue was scary because it would mean the reduction or elimination of services, but there was a part of it with which she agreed, the part about the citizens' right to have a fiscally responsible government. Ms. Parry said the tax cap revolt had come about because residents are tired of their tax dollars being spent to bolster private enterprise and special interests. She said if \$26 million was spent on the rail spur, and there were 2,600 residents in the Valley, that would equate to approximately \$10,000 per resident. She said she did not feel the need to subsidize the resort to the tune of \$10,000 per resident. She felt it would be a waste of her tax dollars, and other members of the community felt the same way. Ms. Parry said it would be fiscally irresponsible to support the project, which would use federal tax dollars, when most Girdwood residents were clearly strongly opposed to it.

Mr. Tremaine asked the people providing comment to also advise the source of the figures they use

JIM DIEHL read a letter from TORY DOOGAN, who could not attend tonight's meeting. The letter from Mr. Doogan said he was in favor of railroads as a means of public transit, but he was against the rail spur for Girdwood. The reason he was against it was its destination, the Alyeska Prince Hotel. He said the spur was obviously not intended to serve residents and commuters but would only benefit the hotel, and that seemed very corrupt to him.

JIM DIEHL said he would like to address a point brought up by Ms. Barnett earlier, that the transportation consultants had never really considered an alternative to the rail spur. He said he thought that was a correct observation, but he believed the consultants, at that time, thought the rail spur would have the support of 50 percent or more of the Valley residents, which is why they did not feel it necessary to consider alternatives. He said if this was indeed a democracy, he would ask the Assembly, when they voted on this issue , to relieve the Girdwood residents from having this dead horse continually dragged around their community.

CRAIG SCHUBERT said the community had turned out in force against the golf course when that issue came up two or three years ago, but Anchorage legislators never received their message. Mr. Schubert said he was against the rail spur as it would not help the Valley at all, nor would it be used by more than a few tourists in the summertime. He said he could not imagine commuters using the rail spur. He said he hoped that when the Assembly listened to the community tonight, they were really listening instead of simply complying with the legal requirement to hold public hearings and hear comment. Mr. Schubert said the red line on the map was not even close to Girdwood, it was off in pristine woods, marshy bogs, and beaver swamps. He said he walked through these areas , both with paths and without, numerous times a year. Mr. Schubert reiterated his opposition to the spur and emphasized that he hoped the Assembly really listened to Girdwood as a community against this project and that it was reflected in the results of their vote on the issue.

In response to Mr. Tremaine, Mr. Schubert said he did not feel the spur was necessary at all, but if it was going to be built, Alternative 5 would be more acceptable than the preferred alternative that cut through the woods. He added that he thought including the corridor in the Plan was acceptable so it would be available if needed 20 years down the road, but he was against the rail spur at this time.

In response to Mr. Tesche, Mr. Schubert said he had lived in Girdwood five years. He felt the large number of tour buses caused congestion on the highway, but he did not feel a rail spur would eliminate or alleviate this problem. He agreed with

Mr. Tesche that the shuttle service suggestion had only come up as an alternative to the rail spur. He said there was currently no taxi service in the Valley, and he did not feel any was needed for the community.

ROBBIE FRANKEVICH said the December vote had been absolutely fair, and Anchorage residents could have exercised their right to vote. Mr. Frankevich said he had lived in the Valley since 1984, and he had spent a lot of his own time out in Moose Meadows grooming the meadows so that visitors could enjoy them. He said if anyone had been out in those meadows on a pristine snowy day, they could not ever envision putting a railroad there. He said the public testimony on the golf course issue previously had basically drawn a line in the sand, and that was the upper Valley. Now that the potential for a golf course in the lower Valley exists, he said the line in the sand has changed. As his closing request, he asked that the Assembly not start whittling away at the upper Valley, because once they start with the rail spur, it would just keep on going.

BARRY KURCHER said he was a 20-year resident of Girdwood and his wife was a 49-year resident. Mr. Kurcher said he was opposed to the rail spur for all the reasons previously mentioned this evening. He said the essence of democracy was compromise. Without compromise, there could not be a functioning democracy. He offered the following compromise: Leave the corridor in the Plan for possible future use, but specify in the Plan that no railroad could be built or even considered until the year 2025. He said the reason for 25 years was a new generation would be in power at that time in the future, and they would have the option of implementing the rail spur if they had different ideas than the current generation. In the meantime, it would protect the current generation from having the constant worry that powerful political factions, government entities, and/or corporate entities would force the rail spur on the community.

DARCY DOOGAN, by GABRIELL BARNETT. Ms. Barnett said Ms. Doogan was 18 years old and was an 18-year Girdwood resident, and she was unable to attend the meeting tonight. Ms. Doogan's letter said the reasons she loved Girdwood were very clear: It is a quiet, peaceful, pristine environment, composed of people who care about the health and safety of the Valley and its residents. She said this was the primary reason people live in Girdwood and were willing to drive 45 miles to and from work each day. She said a rail spur in the Valley would not promote the objectives of the residents in maintaining the status quo. She said it would create consistent unavoidable sound and noise pollution, as well as cause concern to parents with small children who live in the vicinity of the proposed spur. In addition, the construction of the spur would necessitate the devastation of several miles of untouched wilderness and wildlife habitat. Ms. Doogan said local cross-country skiers frequented this area. She said the local residents did not feel the benefits of the spur would be enough to give up their peaceful Valley. In addition, the train stop at the hotel would not benefit Girdwood residents; if residents were inclined to take a train, they would already be using the train depot on Turnagain Arm. She said the primary users of the train service would be hotel guests who would arrive at the hotel on buses anyway. Ms. Doogan pointed out that community residents have repeatedly voiced their opposition to the rail spur, and even the Board of Supervisors was unanimously against it. She asked why they have a Board of Supervisors if their opinions and recommendations are not considered. Ms. Doogan asked the Assembly to listen to the residents and keep the rail spur out of the Valley.

DEBRA CROGIN said she wanted to echo the majority of the people who had commented this evening. She said they have provided informed, passionate, and informative opinions and feelings on the issue. Ms. Crogin also concurred with Ms. Barnett's comments regarding the consultants from Colorado who had worked on the Transportation Plan and the fact that they had focused in on the rail spur to the exclusion of any other alternatives.

SHINE HERFINDAHL, a Girdwood Forest Fair Committee member, said she used to commute from Girdwood to Anchorage by train in 1977. She said a few years ago, the Forest Fair Committee had tried to establish train service from Anchorage for the annual Forest Fair in order to eliminate excessive fair traffic. She said the cost was exorbitant, approximately \$50 per person. She said they advertised the service and hired a musician to play in one of the rail cars, and not one person had used the service. She said a poll had recently been taken of Anchorage residents regarding the rail spur, and the majority said they would like to see it implemented. Ms. Herfindahl said Anchorage residents do not live in Girdwood, they do not understand the issues, and the train would not be going through their back yards -- it would be going through hers. She said she raised her children in Girdwood and she had grandchildren now, and she does not want that for her children, her grandchildren, or her great-grandchildren in the future. Ms. Herfindahl said she loved Girdwood as it was; it was very peaceful and friendly, and people look out for one another. She asked the Assembly to help the community to explain the meaning of the word "No" to those who seem not to understand it. She said Girdwood does not want the rail spur.

Chair Von Gemmingen said in the briefing by Tom Nelson of the Physical Planning Department this afternoon, he had mentioned a second ingress/egress road for public and emergency access and also to alleviate bottlenecks in the area that were the result of area roads not connecting to each other. She said while she realized the rail spur was the hot topic of the Plan, if anyone had any comments regarding other portions of the Plan, the Assembly would appreciate hearing those as well.

BRET BAKER, chiropractic physician, said he had lived in Girdwood for seven years. Mr. Baker echoed others' comments regarding the pristine beauty, peace and quiet, and environmentally clean atmosphere of Girdwood. He noted that the avalanche dangers the community had experienced last year should be enough to warn developers off from wanting to put a rail spur in that area. With respect to Chair Von Gemmingen's comments, Mr. Baker said a second ingress/egress into and out of the Valley would be a prudent idea. Mr. Baker pointed out that the red line reflecting the rail spur route went through the marsh at the mouth of the Valley, which was designated as Class A wetlands and was part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's national wetlands inventory. He said the wetlands play an important role in wildlife habitat and the ecology of the area. He cited several nesting areas for hawks and eagles in the area. Mr. Baker invited the Assembly members to take a walk along the new portion of the bike path through the marsh and view one of the most beautiful places he has ever seen. He requested that someone look into the wetlands designation that was in the path of the proposed rail spur to determine if it could legally be built through that area.

The meeting recessed at 8:50 p.m. and reconvened at 9:00 p.m.

NORMAN STARKEY, a member of the Girdwood Board of Supervisors, said the Board had unanimously passed a motion in support of the Commercial Transportation Master Plan with the exception of that portion dealing with the Winner Creek area. He said the Board requested that a road not be built until further development of the Winner Creek area had taken

place. He noted, however, that Anchorage staff had asked that it be reincorporated into the Plan because the Alyeska Ski Resort would be developing two small pods up on the ski hill along the ingress into the Valley. Mr. Starkey said that development would not be of such significance that a road should be built across Crow Creek?. He asked the Assembly to review the Board of Supervisors' recommendation that the proposed road be eliminated from the Plan. With respect to the rail spur, Mr. Starkey said Map 11, page 48 of the Girdwood Area Plan reflected that the proposed route for the rail spur would go right through a single-family neighborhood. Mr. Starkey also noted that Railroad representatives had advised at earlier meetings there would be a 60-foot embankment cut at California Creek to keep the grade of the rail spur to continue on to the hotel. He said water had been mentioned as a factor, and that would be another form of erosion.

In response to Ms. Abney's question, Mr. Starkey said the map he had referenced at the beginning of his comments was Map 10 at page 42, the Commercial Area Master Plan, which also reflects both directions paralleling the rail spur with the connection of road. He had also referenced page 35, which provides the definition of Crow Creek Albrecht Extension. At Chair Von Gemmingen's request, Mr. Starkey said he would provide a written summary of his remarks to the Assembly members by e-mail.

NATHAN DWYER, a Girdwood resident, said he liked the forest the way it is. He said it was beautiful, and he spent a lot of time in the forest. As a matter of fact, he would be there now if it wasn't for this meeting.

ELLEN DONOHUE said she had graduated in May with a degree in civil engineering, and she had spent part of her summer staking out the Anchorage-to-Eagle-River realignment conducted by the Railroad. She said one of the problems with having rail service for commuters to and from Anchorage was that the train necessarily had to travel slowly because of all the turns on the Seward Highway. She said she thought a commuter train from Anchorage to Eagle River would be a good idea, and the realignment would straighten out the curves between those two locations. Ms. Donohue explained when she had worked on the realignment project this past summer, she had lived in Girdwood and commuted to Anchorage all summer; she would not want to have to add another hour to her day to travel by train when she already spent two hours each day commuting. Ms. Donohue pointed out that they had recently completed the Whittier Tunnel, a very expensive road project, because the train was an inconvenient way for people to commute between Anchorage and Whittier. She said she thought most of the visitors who come to Girdwood on buses go to Portage Glacier as part of a tour, and a train would not fit into the Girdwood visit. She said once on the bus to visit the Portage Glacier, visitors would stop at the bake shop for lunch and would remain on the bus to visit Girdwood and complete their tour.

GREG RUNYON said he lived on Upper Crow Creek Road in the Valley. He said there were no services up there -- no electricity, sewer, phone, or road maintenance. He said if the rail spur went through, he would have none of the amenities but would have to cross a railroad track when entering or leaving his property. Mr. Runyon said he had been able to acquire a new perspective on how Anchorage residents view Girdwood when he worked for Alaska Mountaineering and Hiking on Spenard Road in Anchorage. He noted that the people who frequented that shop were basically a special interest group whose interests included outdoor recreation and many of whom visited Girdwood more than nine times and two nights a year. He said the people that came to Alaska Mountaineering generally visited Girdwood two to three times a week, more during ski season. He said they came to Girdwood to get away from Anchorage, but not to go cross-country skiing in the woods and see a train go by. Mr. Runyon acknowledged that they do have a transportation problem in Girdwood. He said it was a small problem now, but the traffic and congestion were increasing, and he could understand why some entities wanted the rail spur. However, he said it would not benefit the community to construct the spur for a diesel engine train that would generate noise and air pollution and take up much of the wilderness land for the proposed route without alleviating any of the local traffic problems. He said it did not make any sense to him, either from a taxpayer's standpoint or from a resident's standpoint. He said the land could be designated as a railroad corridor for future use, and perhaps future technology would enable them to construct a mass transit system that would be faster, quieter, more cost effective, and have less impact on the surrounding environment and community. Mr. Runyon said Girdwood was a resort community, and having been a bartender in the community for six or seven years, public transportation, such as bus or taxi service, within the community was needed, but a rail spur to the resort was not.

JERRY BURNS, a 34-year resident of Girdwood, said the whole focus of the discussion has been the rail spur, almost as if it was an inevitable thing. He agreed there was a transportation problem in the Valley, but said a rail spur was not the only solution. He said about one-half to two-thirds of Valley residents depend on the Glacier Creek Bridge, and if anything happened to the bridge, that part of the Valley would be stranded. He said building a road along the eastern side of Glacier Creek should be considered. In that scenario, the railroad depot would be point to point from the terminal at the highway up to the Alyeska Prince Hotel. He said it would not be a viable transportation solution for the Girdwood community, but a shuttle bus would be able to go down the road on the eastern side of Glacier Creek and up the other road through the community and serve the community as well as visitors. Mr. Burns pointed out that if the rail spur was built through the Valley, it would not be self-supporting; the government would be subsidizing it. Therefore, if the rail spur was not built, the government money that would have been spent subsidizing it could be used for subsidizing a shuttle bus or taxi service in the Valley instead. He pointed out that this solution would provide transportation to certain destinations within the community and not just point to point between two or three outlying terminals. He emphasized that more time and energy should be spent in exploring alternatives that would benefit the community instead of focusing on the rail spur, which would not benefit the community, as if it was the only viable solution. Mr. Burns said he was personally opposed to the rail spur because the switch yard coming in from Alyeska Prince Hotel and going in the direction of Seward would be right in front of his living room window. He said that was the only wild place that actually connects the upper valley down to the highway, and it should be left alone.

BRUCE CARR, an Alaska Railroad employee, noted that Governor Bill Sheffield, President of the Alaska Railroad, was unable to attend this evening's meeting and would like to give his formal presentation next week. Mr. Carr said he would be happy to respond to any questions.

In response to Mr. Tesche, Mr. Carr said the plan put forth by the Municipality addressed the issue of how Girdwood residents would benefit from the rail spur. He said one of the benefits Girdwood residents may realize would be federal dollars, via the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), that would be brought into the community. He said the FTA was responsible for multi-modalism, i.e., a combination of rail, trains, buses, automobiles. He said the consultants, in the report

before the Assembly, had suggested it may be advantageous to the Valley and the Municipality to bring the strength of the Railroad and the FTA together in order to fund an inter-Valley shuttle bus. In response to Mr. Tesche's question regarding whether there was a need or demand for shuttle bus service in the Valley, Mr. Carr said he would have to defer to Bob Kniefel, Director of the Public Transportation Department. He noted that the consultants, in their analysis contained in the report, had stated it would be appropriate for the Municipality to request additional funds for purchasing and/or operating buses should the rail spur go forward. He said they had recommended small 20-passenger, four-wheel-drive buses for that purpose. Mr. Carr clarified it was not his testimony that there was sufficient demand in Girdwood to extend the People Mover route south to cover that community. In response to Mr. Tesche's question whether the Alaska Railroad would comply with local planning and zoning laws, Mr. Carr said, speaking as a lay person and not an attorney, the Alaska Railroad was required to follow the laws of the local area as they apply to the Alaska Railroad.

Mr. Tremaine asked if the AMATS Policy Board was the venue Mr. Carr was speaking of as the means by which the federal dollars for multi-modal transportation would be obtained. Mr. Carr said there were a number of methods to obtain those funds, i.e., earmarked funds that were received directly by grantees; AMATS, in conjunction with DOT-funded projects, and others. He said the Railroad, as a separate grantee, had received funds for projects they had requested be developed. Mr. Tremaine asked if a cooperative relationship might be possible to review the potential for a multi-modal transit center jointly funded by the Railroad, Municipality, State, and with federal dollar pass-throughs that would combine train transportation to Girdwood and bus transportation into and within Girdwood. Mr. Carr said he would have to defer that question to Governor Sheffield, but he thought that was the concept presented in the Plan.

RITA HALL felt it must be apparent by now that Girdwood was a community at work on the issue of the rail spur. She said this was a community where everyone cared about everyone else, even though they had differing opinions. Ms. Hall asked that when the Assembly reviewed the Transportation Plan and the rail spur issue, that they open their minds and their hearts to the true meaning of the Municipal Charter. She said Mayor Wuerch had recently explained how he felt about the charter in a recent Compass article. She said she had only briefly read the article herself, but it was apparent to her they had elected the Mayor that the community needs. She said it was apparent Mayor Wuerch believes in community involvement, and she asked that the Assembly also believe in community involvement. Ms. Hall pointed out that the Girdwood community had told the Assembly, numerous times and in a variety of ways, what its wishes were with respect to the rail spur. She asked the Assembly to take a stand, and when they asked for community input, to really listen and do their best to heed the wishes of the community. She said the Girdwood Board of Supervisors had provided their recommendations very clearly and in writing. Ms. Hall said she thought it was one of the few times they had had a unanimous vote, and it had been based on hours and hours of input from the community. She asked the Assembly to listen to what the Board of Supervisors had said. She asked that the Assembly think about all the public comments when voting on this issue and give the Girdwood residents what they had asked for.

CARL MITTLESTADT, a ski enthusiast, said he lived in the cabin his uncle had built in 1965, and he had seen a lot of changes in the Valley over the years. Mr. Mittlestadt said he used to live in Anchorage but has resided in the Valley since 1988. He said there were two seasons to Girdwood: summer, consisting primarily of tourism, and winter, consisting primarily of skiing. He said winter tourism did not seem to be a viable concept, and he did not foresee that a rail spur would help promote it. Mr. Mittlestadt noted that during last winter's storm, with 440 inches of snow at the base, the main road was the only one left open into the Valley. He said it would not happen every year, but it would happen some years. He said the rail spur would not be a cost-effective means of transportation for skiers coming from Anchorage. Mr. Mittlestadt said Girdwood residents had the best of both worlds -- they were able to live in and enjoy the beauty of Girdwood with the convenience of Anchorage being nearby. However, progress was on its way, and he cautioned the people planning for the future of the community to handle that progress with vision and wisdom. He agreed that the train was a good idea, but the community was not yet ready for it; maybe the community would be ready for it 25 years from now.

SHAWN SUNCAMP, Alaska resident for 27 years and Girdwood resident for 7 years, noted that the oil boom of the late '70s and early '80s had resulted in over-building, and empty strip malls in Anchorage and Eagle River are commonplace today. He said if they were expecting and preparing for a tourism boom and it didn't happen, the results may be grim. He said they would have an abandoned rail spur running through the Valley, marring someone's vision of otherwise pristine wilderness from their living room window. They would have an abandoned rail spur crossing a trail that someone uses for their daily walk to enjoy the otherwise beautiful marshes. And only the memory of the hawks and eagles that once nested in the area would remain. Mr. Suncamp said these issues should be carefully considered when making plans for Girdwood's future.

CATHY JOY HOLMES, a Girdwood resident since 1986, addressed the Railroad's right-of-way and the recent news report that the Railroad was cracking down on trespassers. She said she had tried to get a copy of the law from the Railroad today but had been unable to due to lack of time. She said it was her understanding the Railroad had a 100-foot right-of-way on either side of the tracks, and trespassing in the right-of-way was a felony punishable by up to one year in jail and a \$1,000 fine. She said she had heard that the Railroad would make a "small footprint" if the rail spur was built, but 200 feet plus the width of the railway was not a small footprint in the already small community of Girdwood. She said the community's children could be felons in jail because they are used to playing in what would be the Railroad's right-of-way. Ms. Holmes said she echoed all of the other comments against the rail spur, and she was adamantly opposed to it. She asked the Assembly to remember the testimony they had heard tonight and at other times on this issue when they met on September 26th to decide the community's fate with respect to the rail spur.

Mr. Carr verified that the Railroad's standard right-of-way was 100 feet on either side of the tracks. However, there were many areas of the railroad where it was less. For example, the airport spur right-of-way was 40 feet on either side. In other areas, where necessary, it was the minimum of 15 feet on either side, just enough to meet FRA regulations.

THOMASJOHN MILLER said his comments would be directed to the Anchorage 2020 Plan. He asked if this meeting was being broadcast on Cable Channel 47 in Anchorage.

Chair Von Gemmingen responded that it was not.

Mr. Miller said he was a media person. He owned Girdwood Daily News, Girdwood.net, and he did Internet consulting. He said he had also been a professional housesitter and had lived in just about every area in Girdwood. He was also a nanny to a four-year-old and a seven-year-old. Contact with a lot of different people gave him a pretty broad view of what goes on in the community. He said the only aspect of "highway" they had not discussed was the high-speed Internet access that they could have in the Valley, which would have virtually no adverse impact on the community. He asked if the Anchorage 2020 Plan included incubators that would allow Girdwood residents to work in their homes and participate in Assembly meetings and other community oriented issues from their homes. He said this was the future, and more and more people were doing it everyday.

Chair Von Gemmingen said the Anchorage 2020 Plan was a land use plan and did not address high-speed Internet access.

Mr. Miller said that was his point exactly -- land use for the right-of-ways to bury communications cables that would permit Girdwood residents to participate in Municipal events without leaving Girdwood. He said Girdwood did not have the same access to their Assembly as their sister community, Anchorage, does, where the Assembly meetings are broadcast on Channel 47, so Anchorage viewers have access to the meetings without having to leave the comfort of their homes to attend them in person.

Chair Von Gemmingen suggested this was an issue Mr. Miller may want to take up with Internet service providers or cable providers who may be able to provide that service from Anchorage. In any event, she pointed out that in most instances, communications cables would not cross Municipal land but state land. Chair Von Gemmingen invited other Assembly member comments on this point.

Mr. Tremaine said this past spring they had delved into the issue of cellular towers, and he had taken a strong interest in the issue. He said at that time, he had learned that industry had planned to install wireless Internet in Girdwood. Mr. Tremaine said to the best of his knowledge, the unveiling of the service was scheduled for the Anchorage bowl this fall. He said the concept was to have pizza-box-size receivers on the houses that subscribed to the service, and incoming 1MB-capacity airwaves that could serve both telephone and Internet services. Therefore, they may not be talking rights-of-way but airwaves to implement the concept Mr. Miller was advocating.

Mr. Miller asked if the Assembly did not feel it was their responsibility to serve Girdwood and Eagle River in the same public manner as they did Anchorage, i.e., Channel 47 for broadcasting the Assembly meetings for all of their constituents to be able to view and have access to their local government in that manner, without leaving the comfort of their homes. Mr. Miller noted that their 91.9 radio station was out for more than a week, and their Channel 5 television station still does not come in. He felt this meeting should be aired on Girdwood viewers' televisions right now, and on Channel 47 for Anchorage viewers. He said that should be part of any long-term plan, because they couldn't even have a plan without communication and inclusion of all of the community's subsectors, and he advocated for that to be part of the plan.

Mr. Tremaine responded that the Assembly had been discussing how they could get their meetings in digital format and up on the Internet. He said this method would also not be available to everyone, but it would provide the opportunity for more people to have access in that manner as well.

Mr. Miller closed by saying that he hoped the Anchorage 2020 Plan includes federal funds and that a communications rider could be included that would be funded by some of those federal dollars.

Ms. Fairclough noted that she lived in Eagle River, and she did not have access to cable television either. She said it was a utility service, and she felt Eagle River and Girdwood should be entitled to be offered the same service as is available to Anchorage residents, but the fact remains that not everyone within the Municipality has access to those services at this time.

GREGORY BUMGUARD said he was originally from a town in California that was similar to Anchorage, and he has observed the dangers that railroads and trains pose to communities and their residents. He said he had come to Girdwood to live because it was beautiful, pristine, unhampered by industrialization, and he did not want to see it scarred by a six-foot wall of gravel, iron, and concrete. He said that did not represent how the residents of the community wanted to live their lives. Mr. Bumguard said he had cross-country skied in the Enchanted Forest in Moose Meadows for the first time last winter. A week later, he had ridden his bicycle around the area for a couple of hours in 10-below-zero weather and had enjoyed the pure beauty of the area, unhindered by unsightly industrial facilities and equipment. He said it would break his heart to see that area marred by the proposed rail spur. Mr. Bumguard said snowmobile usage was normally restricted in the Valley in the wintertime, but they have snowmobile races in the community over about a week-long period. He said the snowmobile noise echoes through the Valley and prevents residents from getting to sleep during the week of the races. He said the noise of a train coming into town one to three times a day would disrupt the entire community. He said to see the community rally together to voice their opposition to the rail spur, only to be vetoed by the demands of big business would make him change his mind about wanting to live in Girdwood.

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

Chair Von Gemmingen thanked everyone for attending and providing comments. She said the Assembly members were always available by phone, fax, voice mail, or email, and they had already received a number of faxes and letters from Girdwood residents. She said the public hearings for both the Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan and the Girdwood Master Transportation Plan would be continued on September 26, 2000, at the Assembly's next regular meeting in the Assembly Chambers at the Loussac Library in Anchorage. She encouraged everyone to attend, and for those who had not testified on this issue before to do so at that time. Chair Von Gemmingen said they had learned a lot about the topography of the Valley tonight, and the Assembly understood the residents' concerns.

Mr. Tremaine pointed out that a large group of people were very interested in the outcome of the Assembly's decision on these issues, and he was unsure whether they would have time to discuss and act on them at the September 26 meeting.

Chair Von Gemmingen concurred with Mr. Tremaine's assessment of the timing of finalizing these issues and said they probably would not vote on them at the September 26 meeting. She felt the Assembly still had some decisions to make, and they were waiting to be provided additional information from the Planning Department.

Mr. Tremaine asked Office of Planning, Development and Public Works Director Craig Campbell whether they would be able to get all the work done so that a decision could be made in October before they commenced the budget discussions.

Mr. Campbell said once the public hearings on the Anchorage 2020 Plan and the Girdwood Master Transportation Plan were finished, it would be the Planning Department's intention to review and consolidate the public comments, Assembly discussion points, and P&Z comments and recommendations, and provide a recommendation back to the Assembly. At that point, they would request work sessions be scheduled for the purpose of discussing the Planning Department's recommendations with the Assembly prior to the Assembly's vote at a future Assembly meeting. He said it was the Planning Department's intention that this would occur during the month of October prior to the commencement of the budget process.

Mr. Tremaine complimented the community on the turnout at tonight's meeting and said it showed "the sense of community" that is Girdwood. He saw this once a month when he attends the Board of Supervisors meetings, but he was glad the full Assembly had the opportunity to see it tonight as well. He expressed his appreciation to the community for attending, for being informed, and for providing their comments. He said Girdwood was part of the Municipality, and as a community, they deserved to be able to have some sense of self-determination.

In response to Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Chandler said when the Board of Supervisors had considered the alternative in the original draft to build a road on the east side of Glacier Creek, they did not try to down-size it. He said it was in the Plan as a collector road, and their recommendation to P&Z had been to make the final location for East Valley access less specific. He said the Board had supported it as a collector road even though the concept was that the most immediate use of it would be as an alternate egress route in the event of an emergency.

In response to Mr. Sullivan's request for a show of hands of those who would like to see a road built east of Glacier Creek, there were none.

Mr. George McCoy said the corridor should be set aside for future use, but they did not want the road built in the near future.

Mr. Sullivan asked for a show of hands of the residents who agreed with Mr. McCoy's statement. There were only two or three people who did not raise their hands.

Ms. Abney echoed Mr. Tremaine's comments and said it always made her proud to see democracy in action in Girdwood, and she was proud to represent them. Ms. Abney thanked the Assembly for hearing testimony in Girdwood this evening.

5. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Chair

ATTEST:

Municipal Clerk

Date Minutes Approved: January 30, 2000

VC/ccarl