

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY/ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD

Minutes for Joint Meeting of February 1, 2000

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was convened at 10:00 a.m. by Assembly Chairman Kevin Meyer in the Mayor's Conference Room, 632 West 6th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska.

2. ROLL CALL:

Assembly Members Present: Dan Kendall, Dan Sullivan, Pat Abney (via telephone), Allan Tesche, Melinda Taylor (10:15 a.m.), George Wuerch, Kevin Meyer, Anna Fairclough, Dick Tremaine, Fay Von Gemmingen.

Assembly Members Absent: , Cheryl Clementson (excused.)

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

School Board Members Absent: Bettye Davis (excused), Dave Werdal (excused.)

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The pledge was led by Ms. Fairclough.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS JOINT MEETING:

A. December 14, 1999

Mr. Wuerch moved,
seconded by Ms. Fairclough,

to approve the minutes of the Joint Meeting of December 14, 1999.

Mr. Wuerch moved,
seconded by Ms. Fairclough,
and it passed without
objection,

to amend the minutes on page 2, in the second-to-last paragraph to read: "...last year's package and requested a comparison summary."

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

5. ADDENDUM TO AGENDA: None.

6. ITEMS OF BUSINESS:

A. School Bonds

Anchorage School District Superintendent Bob Christal referenced Anchorage Ordinance AO 2000-12, which was prepared by the District administration. Mr. Christal described details of the ordinance, explaining since 1993, Anchorage voters have approved almost half a billion dollars in school construction projects. There have been various levels of State support of those bond packages. Most projects in the early 1990's focused on elementary schools. The focus now is on serious needs of aging high schools. He recalled last year, the District received approval for a major replacement of Dimond High and addition of a new school in the south Anchorage area, as well as upgrades at Chugiak High. He proposed, and the School Board approved, the bond proposition for approximately \$57 million, which is reflected in AO 2000-12. The proposition includes District-wide renewal, replacement and Americans with Disabilities Act-required upgrades for about \$5 million. District-wide roof replacement and repairs represent about \$3.4 million. The bond also includes electrical upgrades and support for computers for many schools, mostly elementary and a few middle schools. Traffic safety upgrades represent about \$600,000 and there are funds included for upgrades at Bartlett, East, Service and Girdwood Elementary. Mr. Christal added there is a request for a replacement for Denali Elementary, the oldest elementary school in the District. He said it is likely the replacement school would be located on the same site, with the possibility of a two-story design.

He said the goal was to submit a moderate bond, which he felt was accomplished with the \$57 million package. Mr. Christal discussed the District's six-year plan, which indicated the estimated amounts of bonds in future years to pay for future phases of the high school renovations. He explained the renovations must be done in phases, because it is impossible to do the needed renovations in three months during the summer, and there are no facilities to relocate students for part or all of a school year. The District has performed some studies, and although there is public support for this bond, he acknowledged it would take a lot of work to get more community support.

Ms. Taylor arrived.

Mr. Wuerch said he was a proponent of the plan last year to submit a four-year bond. However, he realized the pressure to reduce this year's bond package in light of uncertain State revenues. He recalled the four-year bond included about \$70 million in bonds for this year.

School Board President Robinson noted the difference was \$38 million funding for Muldoon Middle school, which was originally scheduled in the four-year bond for this year. That project was moved to another year. Ms. Robinson noted phase I for Chugiak High School was included in last year's bond. Construction will begin this summer. They are in the process of performing site selection for another secondary school in the Chugiak/Eagle River area. There were concerns about the size of the entire bond. There is about \$1.5 million included in the bond to address smaller projects in the Chugiak/Eagle River area such as roofing repairs.

In response to Mr. Wuerch, Mr. Christal explained another difference between the current bond and year two of last-year's four-year bond was transfer of Bartlett and East phase I to this year. Wendler renovation also was reduced in scope and was now about \$6 million. He felt the District's six-year Capital Improvement Program is usually ignored, and wanted consistency to be improved. In concept, he felt the community should have information on the District's long-range goals. Also, there was clear direction to reduce the size of the bonds. All these factors cause the changes in the bond package.

President Robinson added site selection for Muldoon Middle school was delayed by unanticipated problems.

Mr. Kendall noted a new high school in Chugiak/Eagle River would probably not be constructed until 2008. He questioned the plans for Chugiak High students in the interim.

Mr. Christal responded one issue is significant under-use of Mirror Lake Middle school, which is at about 70 percent capacity. There are questions about the potential growth in that area. District officials do not have a design for a new high school, and have not discussed plans for overcrowding mitigation with the community. He felt he would be criticized for establishing an overcrowding solution without first discussing it with the community. Chugiak currently has 2,000 students, and the building was designed for 1,750 students. If there is rapid growth, the only potential space for overflow is at Mirror Lake. Another alternative is double-shifting. He said they have not predetermined what to do if growth results in more overcrowding.

President Robinson added they are working with the State Legislature to change the way the Chugiak/Eagle River area is considered in the State reimbursement program. Currently, unless growth becomes very large, the District cannot get State reimbursement for construction in the area. Everything depends on how much growth there really is in the area.

Mr. Kendall questioned the District's plans to incorporate a proposal by the Governor in its six-year plan.

President Robinson explained the Governor's proposal would identify \$60 million for Anchorage, with a 70/30 match program. The District would bid for the funds if the proposal passes.

Kathi Gillespie explained Eagle River would not qualify for the proposed funds, because of the total amount of secondary space in the funding community.

Mr. Christal noted when he spoke with Representative Mulder, the plan was that Anchorage would not receive funds until the second or third year. Neither one of those plans would address problems in Anchorage immediately.

Ms. Von Gemmingen noted a proposed proposition on the State ballot this year would cap property taxes at 10 mills. She understood that all of the proposed bonds would exceed 10 mills. She questioned which of the high school projects is more important, renovation at Chugiak or a new high school in the area.

Mr. Christal felt the renovation was more important. He said it began last year, and some people are frustrated that phases II, III and IV are proceeding slowly. He said the phases cannot be done at the same time, because it would result in tearing the school apart, with a major part of the school being unusable. There is no alternate location to relocate students.

Ms. Fairclough added during meetings she attended, she was told the designers could finish the phases more quickly if there was 100 percent funding for the entire project. She questioned methods of calculations for capacity figures for Chugiak High.

Ray Amsden of the School District said there has historically been confusion about capacity calculations. He explained the District uses calculations based on the number of teachers stations multiplied by 2. The State Department of Education (DOE) regulations mandate calculations based on square footage, taking the net square footage and dividing by 150 square feet per student.

Ms. Fairclough note using the two types of calculations was inconsistent.

Ms. Gillespie pointed out the District uses its own calculations based on population. However, when asking for debt reimbursement from the State, they are obligated to use the State's calculations.

In response to Ms. Fairclough, Mr. Christal said to his knowledge, the District does not have a waiver from the DOE for the eight classrooms added at Chugiak High. He said their position was they are not increasing square footage, because the renovations are ongoing.

In response to Ms. Fairclough, Janet Stokesbary of the District explained how State reimbursement funds were applied.

There was further discussion, and it was agreed District staff would return with more explanations at tonight's Assembly meeting.

Ms. Holthouse noted renovations would probably faster and cheaper if they were done all at one time. However, that is not an option because there is no where to relocate high school students during renovations. That is why renovations are phased, so small pieces of the project can be done while students are occupying the building. She felt equity among all areas of town was important, which is accomplished by the phase system.

Ms. Drummond added that on last year’s bond issue, which was about \$175 million spread among 15 projects, total State reimbursement was \$125 million, about 70 percent. The reimbursement was divided, with the permission of the State, mostly among the two high school projects (Dimond and a new south Anchorage high).

In response to Mr. Tesche, Mr. Christal explained target dates for a new Chugiak/Eagle River area high school. When bonding is approved, it will take another three to five years to go through the design and construction phases. He confirmed the Bartlett renovation was split into phases, for a total of about \$40 million. The cost of a new high school, such as the one being built in south Anchorage, is about \$68 million. He explained the reason the Chugiak/Eagle River school is about \$40 million is because of plans to build a smaller high school, with the ability to add on space as needed.

Mr. Tesche wondered if it was possible to accelerate Chugiak renovations and construction of a new high school in the area, and then transfer Bartlett students to the new Eagle River high school for a year while Bartlett renovations are accelerated.

Mr. Christal noted the new Eagle River school was planned to have an 800-student capacity, and Bartlett has 1,800 capacity. He added East and Service also have serious needs, and each would cost \$40 million. He felt proposing large bonds with 100 percent local funding would not succeed. They are working hard on getting State matching funds for these projects. He pointed out the costs of temporary housing for students are significant and tend to offset the savings from doing the projects all at one time.

Ms. Ossiander noted if funding was available all at once, it would not necessarily mandate the District to do the work all at once, and there would be a significant savings from an inflation focus.

Mr. Tremaine inquired whether roof replacements can be done with bond funds. He asked information on this be available by tonight’s meeting. He also noted traffic improvements have been made at Polaris school, and encouraged everyone to visit and view the site.

Mr. Sullivan questioned whether District officials were confident that East, Bartlett and Services are structurally sound and the proposed renovations will extend the life of the buildings significantly. He was concerned about the need to completely replace the schools in five or seven years.

Mr. Christal replied officials were confident about the renovations.

7. COMMENTS:

Chairman Meyer discussed the anticipated order and complexity of tonight’s Assembly agenda. He intended to continue the meeting to February 8 if business is not finished tonight.

President Robinson noted the District budget was scheduled for Assembly consideration on March 21, 2000.

8. SCHEDULING OF NEXT JOINT MEETINGS:

March 7, 2000 was chosen as the date for the next joint meeting.

9. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Chairman
Anchorage Assembly

President
Anchorage School Board

ATTEST:

Recording Secretary

Date Minutes Approved: March 7, 2000

VC/db