

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY

Minutes for Special Meeting of August 23, 2000

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was convened at 6:00 p.m. by Assembly Chair Fay Von Gemmingen in the Assembly Chambers, 3600 Denali, Anchorage, Alaska.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Dan Kendall, Allan Tesche, Fay Von Gemmingen, Kevin Meyer (6:12 p.m.), Anna Fairclough, Melinda Taylor, Wilda Hudson.

Absent: Dan Sullivan, Dick Tremaine, Pat Abney, Cheryl Clementson (all members excused.)

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The pledge was led by Chair Von Gemmingen.

Chair Von Gemmingen recognized members of the Planning and Zoning Commission present in the audience.

4. 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 AND 8-15-00)

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

RICK MORRISON, chair of the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, spoke on behalf of the Board and the Chambers 1,200 members. Mr. Morrison commended the many people who have worked to bring the Comprehensive Plan to this point. He noted the Chamber approved a resolution, 9900-15, stating its concerns about the Plan's acceptance and implementation. Mr. Morrison provided a copy of the Plan with recommendations and changes clearly marked. He said the Plan was good, but felt it was important it not be accepted in its present form. First, an economic analysis of the Plan should be completed before final adoption. Any economic flaws or weaknesses should be corrected in the final version. Mr. Morrison noted the study performed by Tischler & Associates revealed the Municipality is not in a position to fund provisions in the Plan under the current revenue structure. The study results showed an annual deficit of about \$27 million if no changes are made to revenue sources. A second recommendation was that development of neighborhood commercial centers be encouraged, but not mandated, under the Plan. Currently, the Plan makes mandates in some areas. He felt the Plan should be a guide only. Thirdly, all references to Living With Wildlife in Anchorage: A Cooperative Planning Effort, should be removed from the Comprehensive Plan. He pointed out the Plan is for land use issues, and the animal study was not an appropriate addition. He noted the study did not include a good representation of the public. Although living with wildlife is a concern and should be addressed, the Comprehensive Plan was not an appropriate forum. A fourth recommendation was that additional considerations for transportation be incorporated into the Plan. Mr. Morrison added another recommendation that all language in the Plan which are prescriptive or mandatory in nature be restated so that the Plan provides broad, general guidance for the future. He felt the Plan would fail without the proposed changes. He said it would be irresponsible to approve a Plan without the means to pay for implementation.

In response to Mr. Tesche, Mr. Morrison spoke as an individual and said he felt any plan would be flawed if it did not include a reliable process for funding. He felt the Chamber would be interested in working with Municipal officials to draft an ordinance establishing a development fee structure.

APRIL JENSEN, president of the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, said she was involved with the Plan revision for a long time. She was excited about the Plan, but felt some changes must be made before implementation. She pointed out the Living With Wildlife in Anchorage: A Cooperative Planning Effort document was very difficult to obtain, so she doubted that many citizens have been able to read the document. She could not understand why this document was incorporated into the Plan, as the Plan is about development and growth of the community. The Living With Wildlife in Anchorage: A Cooperative Planning Effort document has ideas and concepts which are very adversarial to development.

PATTY DEMARCO noted she was involved with the Prosperity and Places to Work citizen working group which worked on the Plan. She felt jobs were an important issue in a development plan. She stressed the Plan is not a static work; for it to become a blueprint for Anchorage to grow in the coming years, it must have dynamic interplay components. Ms. DeMarco noted over 80 business representatives participated in the Prosperity and Places to Work group. They made specific recommendations which have been translated into the goals language in the Plan. She said regardless of the type of development in the future, growth and funding will have to be balanced. She stressed there must be a conscious choice to develop an economy that can be sustained over the long term. Ms. DeMarco recommended the Tischler & Associates study

choices be evaluated regarding funding of Municipal services and infrastructure, and those that enhance the economy be favored.

In response to Mr. Kendall, Ms. DeMarco felt a bridge spanning Knik Arm would require evaluation of many types of economic justification. She felt a staged evolution starting with rail service, evolving to ferry service, to create demand for bridge service would be best. She stressed cooperation between Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough would be a key issue.

In response to Mr. Tesche, Ms. DeMarco pointed out possibilities for connection to global trade routes are amplified by the number of opportunities for intersection of the routes. She felt there should be some attention on developing express trade corridors that will allow generation of freight and travel in an express manner without travel through neighborhoods.

ERIC BRITTEN noted the Plan refers to a number of other studies which will be consulted as planning progresses. He echoed the concerns of previous speakers regarding inclusion of the Living With Wildlife in Anchorage: A Cooperative Planning Effort document in the Plan. He felt it did not have a place in the Plan. Mr. Britten added commercial traffic issues are not adequately addressed in the Plan. Commercial routes that are safe, direct and provide good access versus allowing truck traffic in neighborhoods where children and pedestrians are present are questions that must be addressed. Mr. Britten expressed concern about another theme in the Plan, regarding aesthetics. Although he felt landscaping and other amenities are important, he saw no reason to use more than 15 percent of a project to provide aesthetic amenities. He pointed out the costs of implementing the ideas in the Plan must have identified funding sources. He felt the Plan was an excellent start, but there were many components which were incomplete or ambiguous.

Public Works Director Craig Campbell requested Tom Nelson of Planning to address the Living With Wildlife in Anchorage: A Cooperative Planning Effort document.

Mr. Nelson explained one of the recommendations by the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z), during its review of the Plan, was that reference to this document be removed from the Plan. Mr. Nelson explained P&Z members felt there was not sufficient time for the document to be reviewed. The document was not part of the Plan process.

CHRIS HYATT, an attorney, felt the Plan was a good start. However, she felt there should be changes made, especially with regard to mandatory language in the Plan. She quoted from page 66, "the policies are designed to be enforceable and to direct Municipal actions and decisions." However, most of the policies are not written with enforceable language. She felt leaving both types of language in the document was an invitation to creative litigation. Ms. Hyatt felt a better approach would be to have guidelines and goals in the Plan, and wait until ordinances that have been properly written, defined and reviewed to address specifics.

KAREN HEDLAND, representing the League of Women Voters, asked the Assembly to recognize the hundreds of hours of time dedicated to the Plan revision by citizens and planning experts. She said the League was very appreciative of these efforts by citizens and the Administration. Ms. Hedland noted the League first developed a position on the Plan in 1971. The position then was that the League supported comprehensive planning and the effective implementation of a plan aimed at quality growth and development compatible with four basic areas of concern: planning that includes schools; transportation systems with good roads and mass transit, parks and other community facilities; planning implementation and administration, including a zoning map based on comprehensive planning, residential development with different levels of improvement based on subdivision density, parks and open spaces; and preservation of natural features and community appearance. Ms. Hedland said this position was re-adopted in 1982, 1984, 1994 and 1999. The League has pursued this Plan diligently over the years, and felt it was time to move forward on this Plan.

In response to Mr. Tesche, Mr. Hedland felt there was no time to wait for other studies referenced in the Plan to be completed. She pointed out Anchorage is a rapidly growing community and needed a Plan now.

BOB BUTERA, president of the Rogers Park Community Council, spoke representing the Council. He said the Council has participated in the Plan revisions over the past three years. Each year, an entire meeting was dedicated to reviewing the Plan's progress, and there was good attendance at these meetings. The Council encouraged the Assembly to adopt the proposed Plan. They have reviewed the latest recommended revisions, and concur with most of them. The sole change requested was under Transportation Policies, "design, construct and maintain roadways and rights-of-ways to accommodate pedestrians, transit users, disabled automobiles and trucks." He asked that bicycles be added to this list. He felt they were very conspicuous by their absence.

MAUREEN DEZEEUW, a biologist, said she was involved with the Plan revisions and the Living With Wildlife in Anchorage: A Cooperative Planning Effort document. She spoke as a private citizen. She gave her unqualified support for adoption of the Plan. Ms. Dezeew agreed with the speaker from the League of Women Voters that the Plan must get under way. There will always be people who dissent; she felt those who want to wait indefinitely for other referenced plans to be complete have another agenda. If we wait until all parties are completely satisfied, nothing will ever proceed. She felt the proposed Plan was a great start with a beautiful vision. It did a good job of integrating the issues of open spaces, redevelopment, economic viability and growth, which will make a beautiful city.

HARRY DONAHUE, a resident on Moose Meadow Lane, near the intersection of Birch and O'Malley Road, felt those who express concern about the cost of the Plan are somewhat premature. He noted the whole purpose of the Plan was to promote discussion over the long term. No one can predict 20 years into the future; when issues get to the budgeting stage, there will be time for monetary discussions. Mr. Donahue said the hillside was a unique place with special features. He felt the highest and best use of this area would be to preclude commercial development west of Lake Otis Boulevard. If a shopping mall is allowed at the intersection of Birch and O'Malley, malls will gradually spread to the entire hillside. The neighborhood atmosphere of the area will be lost, and the view of the hillside will include all the light pollution that mars the rest of Anchorage. Mr. Donahue felt keeping the hillside a neighborhood area will enhance diversity in Anchorage.

RANDY VIRGIN, director of the Alaska Center for the Environment, explained the organization advocates for natural resource balance and protection and enhancement of quality of life for Anchorage citizens. He felt Anchorage cannot afford to not plan for the future, nor to fail to attract industries that are looking for places to expand with a good quality of life. Mr. Virgin said loss of the tax base and planning with area wildlife in mind are also important issues. He felt public input and involvement in Airport issues was imperative. Investment in public transportation is important in light of the current gridlock on area roads. He felt the Plan must be implemented now, so the little undeveloped land can be addressed in a way that preserves the Alaskan ideal. Mr. Virgin felt the public supports the Plan, which is not perfect but represents thousands of hours of public involvement. He was concerned about the Mayor's proposed budget, which significantly affects the Planning Department. A strong Planning Department is necessary to implement the Plan. He urged the Assembly to adopt the Plan, and to scrutinize the Planning Department budget, and budgets for other departments which will help implement the Plan.

SUSAN KLEIN urged the Assembly to support the Plan, including implementation of the goals set forth in the Plan. She felt there was a wide representation of people involved in the process. She also urged the Assembly to support the conservation of natural open spaces as a way to increase the value of land in Anchorage. Ms. Klein expressed concern about the large amount of space allocated to the Airport in the Plan. She urged the Assembly to carefully investigate the impact of this increase adjacent to residential areas. There is limited land available for residential development; encouraging the Airport's increased impact on west Anchorage neighborhoods will likely decrease residential property values in those areas. She urged Municipal officials to work with the State of Alaska to consider alternative sites for air cargo development.

DAVID KINCAID, a long-time resident of Anchorage, was a member of the original master plan committee for the Anchorage International Airport. He felt all the goals in the master plan have been achieved, and even exceeded. Mr. Kincaid noted this plan included a contingency in the event the Airport exceeded its boundaries, to move the overflow to an area across Cook Inlet. He wanted to see an effort to preserve neighborhoods in the Sand Lake and Turnagain areas. He also encouraged development of the Airport. He felt the current location was good, up to a point. Further expansion should take place in another area. Mr. Kincaid agreed the Comprehensive Plan was necessary, but urged the Assembly to adopt it while addressing specific concerns of various neighborhoods.

MARTHA LEVINSALER, with the National Wildlife Federation, noted the group advocates for common sense conservation which benefits both people and wildlife. She was involved in the Plan revision process from the beginning, serving on various task forces and committees. Ms. Levinsaler felt her input and that of other people involved have been included in the Plan. She felt the Plan was an excellent document to lead our community into the future. She stressed implementation was the most important part of the Plan, and she expressed concern that pending budget cuts may affect implementation. Ms. Levinsaler felt approval of the Plan and support of funding for implementation was very important.

PAULA BOYER, a resident of downtown, asked the Assembly to adopt the Plan and see that it is implemented. She said the Plan represents many diverse interests; it does a good job of preserving open spaces and providing pedestrian amenities. Ms. Boyer liked the fact that the Plan emphasizes growth in the Anchorage core, rather than encouraging sprawl.

PAUL LAVERTY, a member of an initial task force that began work on the Plan almost three years ago, was happy a final product has resulted. He thanked Planning Department staff for honoring the goals and objectives established by his task force. Mr. Laverty questioned why, in the Land Use Policy Map, Northern Lights Boulevard, Benson Boulevard and Boniface Parkway are not shown as transit supportive development corridors. He urged that the term "transit supportive development corridors" be added to chapter 5, under the explanation of strategies. He felt this concept was very important and should be described further in the Plan. Mr. Laverty addressed the statements in the Plan on page 9, 36 and 37 and asked the Assembly to pay close attention to these portions of the Plan. These areas capture the general sentiments of the community, which have been adequately represented in the Plan. He felt efficient use of the remaining undeveloped land in the bowl area was an important goal. Mr. Laverty felt affordable housing would become an issue that needs to be addressed more in the future. He was glad that issue was included in the Plan and addressed in a positive light.

MARY ELLEN KINCAID spoke about expansion of the Airport. She noted expansion in the area of the gravel pits would displace more than 200 families and would ruin a neighborhood. She felt this was not the best use of this land. Ms. Kincaid recalled during a Sand Lake community meeting, Airport officials said they would never agree to such a plan as there was sufficient land for expansion at the Airport. She and many others took them at their word. She felt Fire Island would be a good alternative to develop a cargo refueling area. This would also reduce the amount of aircraft noise in Anchorage, which has become a problem.

JUDY MOERLEIN, a 39-year resident of Anchorage, commended Community Planning and Development Department staff for the approach and style of the Plan. She felt it was vital to see the Plan, and its goals and objectives, continue to the point of implementation. Ms. Moerlein expressed concern about two aspects in the Land Use Policy Map. She said the area designated as "urban/rural services" has always been intended to be single-family, low density development encouraged by large lots as zoned in the 1970's and 1980's. She felt it was important that low density does and should drive the need for future creation of Municipal water and sewer lines. It should not happen that public water and sewer lines be established in this area in order to allow an increase in density. Higher density would be at the expense of the livable rural lifestyle envisioned by those who choose to live apart from the heart of town in a more natural setting. The slope and topography of this land does not lend itself to the development requirements for higher density. Ms. Moerlein said the Hillside Wastewater Management Plan is essential and will augment the studies made to date. She said included in the land use plan are neighborhood commercial centers. She felt it was totally inappropriate that one of these centers has been planned to be located at the intersection of Birch and O'Malley Road. This is the center of a residential area, intended to have no commercial development.

In response to Mr. Tesche, Ms. Moerlein said she did not object to the proposed commercial center on the Land Use Policy Map near the Seward Highway and Rabbit Creek Road, because she did not consider that particular area to be in the rural/urban area. She clarified the hillside area was planned so only to be served by commercial development when residents request that service. She felt commercial development on the hillside would take away a unique character that residents have worked hard to achieve. Commercial development provides conveniences which should not be offered if it means the sacrifice of an area that was intended for a different purpose.

Chair Von Gemmingen asked if anyone else wished to speak. There was no one. She announced the next opportunity to testify on the ordinance was August 29, 2000.

Ms. Fairclough noted Anchorage International Airport officials are seeking input from the public on a ground noise study.

Tom Nelson of the Community Planning and Development Department announced that Paul Tischler of Tischler and Associates will present the results of the Comprehensive Plan Fiscal Analysis on September 12 and 13 at a public meeting in the Wilda Marston Theatre. Mr. Tischler will be involved with the worksession earlier in the day on September 12.

5. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Chair

ATTEST:

Municipal Clerk

Date Minutes Approved: January 23, 2001

VC/db