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3 **Anchorage Municipal Assembly and Anchorage School Board**  
4 **Joint Meeting**

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6 **Mayor's Conference Room**  
7 **Eighth Floor, City Hall**

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9 **Minutes for Joint Meeting of March 12, 2004**  
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22 **1. CALL TO ORDER**

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24 The Joint Meeting of the Municipal Assembly and the Anchorage School Board was called to order by Acting Chair  
25 Whittle at 10:00 a.m. in the Mayor's Conference Room, Eighth Floor, City Hall, 632 West 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Anchorage,  
26 Alaska.

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28 **2. ROLL CALL**

29  
30 **ASSEMBLYMEMBERS**

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32 PRESENT: Brian Whittle, Fay Von Gemmingen, Janice Shamberg and Dan Sullivan.

33 ABSENT: Allan Tesche, Melinda Taylor, Dick Traini, Anna Fairclough, Doug Van Etten, Dan Kendall and Dick  
34 Tremaine, each excused.

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36 **SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS**

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38 PRESENT: President Jake Metcalfe, Vice President Tim Steele, John Steiner, Jeff Friedman, Crystal Kennedy,  
39 Clerk Mary Marks and Treasurer Macon Roberts.

40 ABSENT: None.  
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42 Also present were Anchorage School District (ASD) Superintendent Carol Comeau, Anne Reed, Anne Spohnholtz,  
43 Janet Stokesbury, Marie Laule, Assembly Budget Director, Elvi Gray-Jackson and Municipal Clerk Barbara Gruenstein.  
44

45 **3. ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

- 46  
47 3.A. Ordinance No. AO 2004-28, an ordinance determining and approving the total amount of the **annual**  
48 **operating budget of the Anchorage School District** for its fiscal year 2004-2005 and determining  
49 and appropriating the portion of the Assembly approved budget amount to be made available from  
50 local sources; Anchorage School District.  
51

52 Superintendent Comeau gave the floor to the ASD Budget Advisory Commissioner to hear their report, summarizing  
53 their findings of the 2004-2005 budget.  
54

55 Ms. Spohnholtz discussed the ordinance to be addressed by the Assembly, for an allocation in the amount of  
56 \$500,461,881. The ASD had grants being considered for possible additional fund sources and there were still  
57 unfunded mandates from the state and federal governments. A TERS and PERS contribution would create a deficit,  
58 not only for 2004-2005, but also in the years to come. Budget Advisory Board Members commended the Anchorage  
59 School District for dealing with the large deficit in a very responsible manner and urged the Assembly to approve the  
60 proposed ASD Budget.  
61

62 To Ms. Von Gemmingen, Superintendent Comeau responded that if the recent State House Bill passed the Alaska  
63 Senate, it would mean an additional \$82 million dollars.  
64

65 To Mr. Sullivan, Superintendent Comeau responded that if the ASD received additional revenue the proposed cuts  
66 would be reevaluated and the ASD would make recommendations to the ASB Advisory Board, allowing them to make  
67 necessary changes.  
68

69 Mr. Metcalfe stated that the ASD was sending a message to Juneau that budget appropriations were needed. The  
70 ASD also urged consideration of developing a fiscal plan. Morale was low in Anchorage, due to lack of future security  
71 and not knowing what would happen. He encouraged citizens to keep in communication with their local community  
72 councils and state offices to voice their opinions and be kept informed.  
73

74 To Mr. Metcalfe, Budget Advisory Board Member Anne Reed responded that the board had proposed this budget  
75 knowing the predicted revenues and expenses. They supported the ASD proposed budget cuts.

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2 Mr. Steiner stated that the ASB was sending the message that the schools had reached "adequacy" for education and  
3 required stability and adequate funding. They had recently reviewed a draft of the ASD six-year plan and supported the  
4 purchase and renovation of the Kmart building for the administration/training facility. The ASB viewed this as the  
5 opportunity to bring all components together, to work closely side-by-side, in one space and were optimistic that  
6 Anchorage voters understood the long term cost savings of this venture and would support the bond proposition.

7  
8 Ms. Von Gemmingen stated that when she discussed the city's education she made certain that she described  
9 "quality," not just "adequate" education. She defined quality education with small class sizes and enough books for  
10 every student, along with other basics that had been taken for granted in the past.

11  
12 Superintendent Comeau concurred. She stated that she was frustrated with the state and federal unfunded mandates.  
13 Any additional appropriations would apply to supplies, class size and quality instruction. Because of the cuts they were  
14 paying for supplies out of the general fund. The mandates were based on raising the achievement level of the lower  
15 achieving student. The middle range and high range achieving student deserved a quality education also and the  
16 district was committed not to lose sight of them. Priorities would be given to instructional programs and solid  
17 preventative maintenance programs to keep the schools safe and well maintained. To Ms. Shamberg, the  
18 Superintendent responded that she did not believe the public was aware of the budget concerns. The ASD Curriculum  
19 Audit indicated that more administration was needed. Ms. Spohnholtz responded that while it was originally believed  
20 the ASD administration numbers were too high, the national statistics showed Anchorage was below the average.

21  
22 Mr. Steele stated that the ASD, with 50,000 students, was number 81 in the nation for numbers of students. He defined  
23 a "quality education" as children reaching the targeted achievement levels and it included sports and arts to keep the  
24 students in the schools. He stated that the cost of testing was coming out of the appropriated money.

25  
26 Ms. Marks stated the necessary cuts were being made to the education operating budget. She urged the State of  
27 Alaska to adopt a fiscal plan to ensure these tremendous cuts would not happen again.

28  
29 Mr. Steele stated that the No Child Left Behind Program (*NCLB*) was holding school districts responsible for society's  
30 problems. He discussed the loss of state and federal appropriations and how it affected the social services that helped  
31 children in numerous ways. The ASB was hopeful the State of Alaska would adopt a fiscal plan to assist school  
32 districts to continue those important services.

33  
34 The Superintendent spoke in support of the plan for a centralized administration building. It would bring people  
35 together to be more efficient, lessen duplication and consolidate supplies. Federal funding cuts had forced the ASD to  
36 appropriate the costs of necessary social programs out of their operating budget for education. Those services  
37 included use of paraprofessionals for handicapped students and specialized bussing.

38  
39 Mr. Metcalfe spoke of the comments from State Representatives who felt that the ASD could not afford to make any  
40 more cuts.

41  
42 Ms. Spohnholtz stated the ASD Administration was efficient, but the students felt the affects of the budget cuts.  
43 Superintendent Comeau responded that everyone was being affected by these cuts and the children were missing  
44 things that had been taken for granted in the past.

45  
46 Mr. Roberts took offense at the opinion that the children academic levels were failing. Top academic levels were still  
47 being produced. The ASD had a history of quality education and top academic levels were still being produced.

48  
49 Acting Chair Whittle felt that Washington needed to hear about the NCLB issues. The pubic needed to be educated  
50 about the expense of school operations. Superintendent Comeau responded that the ASD was trying to raise fees to  
51 maintain sports C-teams. Fund raisers would help with the expense of coaches. She was not prepared to cut all the  
52 extra-curricular activities from the ASD, such as sports, debate, art and music. The Budget Basics Report was a list of  
53 the ASD priorities and included public response, budget funding and proposed cuts. The ASD's goal remained to  
54 educate kids in healthy environments and well maintained facilities.

55  
56 Mr. Sullivan stated that the review showed a doubling of taxes over the past years and recommended including  
57 additional costs and unfunded mandates with the breakdown expenses, to better explain the situation. Superintendent  
58 Comeau responded that the ASD was working on a spreadsheet of those facts, including the NCLB. She stated that  
59 the largest unexpected expense had been to the PERS and TERS retirement systems. The district had not yet asked  
60 the teachers' bargaining units to negotiate because they were waiting for possible additional funding, but negotiations  
61 were expected to begin sometime this year. They were currently negotiating contracts with Totem, the Principals, bus  
62 drivers, maintenance workers and custodians.

63  
64 Mr. Steiner stated that if salaries and benefits were reduced they would lose quality educators. The district was already  
65 losing good educators. Mr. Friedman added that the study showed ASD teachers' salary levels were well below  
66 national standards.

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68 Ms. Von Gemmingen thanked the Budget Advisory Committee for their report and stated that Superintendent Comeau,  
69 her staff and the School Board were doing a wonderful job. Mr. Steele also thanked the Budget Advisory Committee  
70 for all their hard work on the report.

71  
72 Superintendent Comeau stated the Food Division was completely self supporting. They had good grant writers who  
73 were doing a successful job finding additional moneys. To help reduce the rising costs of health care, the ASD was  
74 educating their employees with the issues of health costs, benefits and prevention.

1 To Ms. Shamberg's question, Ms. Comeau responded that the 2004 summer program was already calculated in the  
2 budget, but would see possible cuts in the future. She was not happy with the numerous things the district had been  
3 forced to cut. Kindergarten aids had been cut. They needed more grant writers and assistants, but could not hire any  
4 more administration.

5  
6 Acting Chair Whittle stated that MOA property taxes had been increased because the Assembly and the Administration  
7 were trying to support the schools. He urged the ASD and the ASB to educate the public so they would understand the  
8 issue. Mr. Steele responded the ASB was trying to educate the public on debt reimbursement and the budget.  
9 Members of the ASD had varying stands on the issue of State Senate Bill 12, concerning incorporating boroughs in  
10 Alaska. He urged the Assembly to address this issue with state representatives.

11  
12 To Mr. Sullivan, Superintendent Comeau responded that every year students moved into the Anchorage area from rural  
13 Alaska. It was critically important that the children were prepared for the academic levels of the ASD.

14  
15 Mr. Metcalfe stated it was critical for the state to adopt a fiscal plan, which would resolve many of the problems they  
16 were now facing. All Assemblymembers and School Board Members agreed that a fiscal plan was needed.

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18 **20. ADJOURNMENT** Acting Chair Whittle adjourned the meeting at 11:15 a.m.

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26 *Refer to Document Archives for Signatures*

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30 JAKE METCALFE, ASB President

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BRIAN WHITTLE, Acting Assembly Chair

31  
32 ATTEST:

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37 *Refer to Document Archives for Signatures*

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40 BARBARA GRUENSTEIN, Municipal Clerk  
41 Date Minutes Approved: September 19, 2004  
42 MC/BG  
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