

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY

Assembly Conference Room
First Floor, Suite 155, City Hall

Minutes for Special Meeting of August 31, 2005, amended

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Special Assembly Meeting was convened by Chair Fairclough at 11:40 a.m. in the Assembly Conference Room, First Floor, City Hall, 632 West 6th Avenue in Anchorage, Alaska.

2. ROLL CALL A Quorum was achieved with Assemblymembers present.

PRESENT: Pamela Jennings, Dick Traini, Paul Bauer, Ken Stout, Chris Birch, Dan Coffey, Anna Fairclough, Dan Sullivan, Janice Shamberg and Allan Tesche.

ABSENT: Debbie Ossiander, excused.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Assemblymember Sullivan led the pledge.

4. NEW BUSINESS

Chair Fairclough stated that she had called the meeting to address the reorganization of the Assembly Department, preparing for the 2006 Budget and forecasting to 2007. Every person in the department was a valued, trusted and honored employee, and it was difficult to propose eliminating positions. Data had been collected and reviewed from the Assembly Office, the Municipal Clerk's Office and from other clerk's offices in the state and from other states, for cost comparatives. The proposed organizational structure would eliminate one or two positions and streamline the office. The intention was to locate all staff together to reduce redundancy and a draft chart was distributed, indicating positions duplicating tasks. The Ombudsman's Office was to remain standing alone. Mr. Tesche asked when a more specific chart would be distributed.

To Mr. Traini, Chair Fairclough explained they had discussed a number of options, including new job descriptions and consolidating the two offices. The Municipal Clerk would take responsibility, under the new structure.

To Mr. Tesche, Chair Fairclough responded the search was continuing for an Assembly Attorney and the Clerk's Office had received 4 or 5 applications. As a member of the review committee, Mr. Tesche requested copies of those applications and asked to be consulted and kept informed. He questioned the need for a full-time attorney. To his question, Municipal Manager Denis LeBlanc responded the OMB had not advised the Assembly or any department to reduce personnel to achieve a cost savings. Chair Fairclough responded they ~~were~~ expected to save up to \$150,000. Mr. Tesche stated that the Ombudsman's Office, the Assembly Office and the Clerk's Office were the best and most proficient they had ever been, in the history of the city. It was ultimately the staff that had created that proficiency. He questioned the need for cutting staff when the Agenda was in trouble for the next 6 months because there were so many important issues to address.

Mr. Birch preferred a single point of contact and center of leadership, which typically was the Municipal Clerk. They had discussed this issue at the recent Assembly retreat.

Ms. Shamberg supported saving money, but would prefer to achieve it through attrition. She had relied on Ms. Gray-Jackson, Ms. Pantaleon, Mr. Gutierrez and Ms. Lutz.

Chair Fairclough stated streamlining would help reduce duplicating and currently she was proposing to eliminate one Budget Analyst position. Disparity of position's wages among offices also needed to be addressed. Ms. Gray-Jackson responded that \$145,000 of the Budget and Legislative Services budget was for the Internal Audit.

Mr. Coffey stated that the Assembly and the Administration had a tremendous workload, currently addressing critically important issues, on the 2005-2006 Agendas. It was important and the public expected them to be fiscally conservative and collaborative. With these cost savings, the Assembly Office would be setting an example for other departments. Chair Fairclough responded it was being responsible.

Mr. Sullivan welcomed the chance to look at how to do things better. He stated that traditionally there had been great turnover in the Clerk's Office, because the pay and standards of those positions had been compromised. He supported designating the Clerk's Office as the center point of contact. He supported adding a full-time Assembly Attorney to the Clerk's Office and that he had relied on the professional expertise of the former Assembly Attorney.

Mr. Tesche concurred with Mr. Coffey, that the amount of government business being generated by the current Administration was unprecedented, which put an incredible additional burden on the Assembly. It was ironic that it was being proposed to cut the office. They were working well with the Municipal Attorney's Department, but it would be an advantage to have their own Assembly Attorney.

Chair Fairclough discussed the possibility of using the Mayor's Conference Room instead of the Assembly conference Room for future meetings, because of the heating, air-exchange noise, and she welcomed discussion on that issue. Mr. Traini responded that he preferred the First Floor Assembly Conference Room. Mr. Stout responded it was difficult for him to hear in the Conference Room and would prefer the Mayor's Conference Room. Mr. Tesche responded that relocating should be considered.

Chair Fairclough felt that implementation of the reorganization needed to be handled quickly and was looking at a fast resolution for the process to move forward. Mr. Coffey responded that addressing the personnel issue was secondary to the effort of improving the efficiency and production of the Assembly Office. The proposed recommendations appeared to be addressing efficiencies only and did not focus on positions or personalities.

Ms. Shamberg stated that not having their own attorney had put some members in a tough spot and suggested the Municipal Attorney's Office could designate a single point of contact in his office. Chair Fairclough responded that the Clerk's Office was testing the waters, circulating a letter, describing the attorney's position.

Ms. Jennings requested an explanation of things that were not working in the current organization. Chair Fairclough responded there were too many points of contact for scheduling and she had missed information and it was more difficult to schedule events. To Ms. Jennings, Mr. Traini responded that he had not experienced any problems. To Ms. Jennings, Chair Fairclough responded the same concern had been expressed by other members and there were too many duplications of services and too many access points for information. Chair Fairclough responded this did not involve personalities and they had not identified which positions they were considering to eliminate.

Chair Fairclough called the Question to go into Executive Session. Mr. Coffey stated an Executive Session was necessary, to discuss subjects that might tend to prejudice the reputation and character of a person.

Mr. Coffey moved, for the Assembly to move into Executive Session,
Mr. Traini seconded,
and this was later withdrawn.

To Mr. Tesche, Municipal Attorney Fred Boness concurred that an Executive Session was founded under these circumstances, under Municipal and State Law, but it needed to be noticed. Mr. Coffey responded it was not clear which person might be discussed. Mr. Tesche responded that State Law required that any person who might be discussed needed to know, so that a public discussion may be requested. Mr. Tesche urged a NO-vote, since he did not feel it was properly noticed and the persons to be discussed were not given the opportunity to decide if they wanted a public discussion. They were taking too much risk. Mr. Coffey withdrew the motion and the second concurred.

Mr. Tesche recommended a poll from constituents to determine the needs of the Assembly Office. That collected data could be used to craft an organizational chart.

Mr. Birch thought the process took a long time to get things done. Cost savings could be achieved and he requested to review an organizational chart, job descriptions, needed services and a budget. He did not like a popularity poll of citizens and would support the Chair in her position of responsibility. He supported having a designated attorney or possibly a flex-sharing with the Municipal Attorney.

Ms. Shamberg requested salary information. Mr. Coffey responded that information about positions in the Assembly Office were public information.

Mr. Sullivan stated there was enough work with issues that needed legal support in the Clerk's Office to justify a full-time attorney, including boards, licensing and issues from the Ombudsman's Office. To Mr. Coffey, the Municipal Clerk responded the office also handled Board of Adjustment cases. Mr. Traini wanted nothing less than the Assembly having its own attorney and recommended consideration of an attorney running the entire department.

Mr. Tesche wanted clear understanding that the Municipal Attorney would designate an attorney for the Assembly. Mr. Sullivan responded that after working with Assembly Attorney Michael Gatti, he appreciated having a separate attorney who could also offer support to the Clerk.

20. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Coffey moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Sullivan and there were no objections. *(Clerk's Note: The Meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.)*

ATTEST:

ANNA FAIRCLOUGH, Assembly Chair

BARBARA GRUENSTEIN, Municipal Clerk
Date Minutes Amended and Approved: October 11, 2005
MC/BG

(Approved Meeting Minutes and documents are available in the Municipal Clerk's Office, 632 West 6th Avenue, Suite 250, Anchorage, Alaska, telephone (907)343-4505, or on the Municipal Web Site at www.Muni.org~Assembly~Minutes)