

**The Anchorage Municipal Assembly and Anchorage School Board
Joint Meeting**

**Assembly Conference Room
632 West Sixth Avenue**

Minutes for Joint Meeting of December 1, 2006

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Joint Meeting was convened by Assembly Chair Sullivan at 10:13 a.m. in the Assembly Conference Room in City Hall, Room 155, in Anchorage, Alaska.

2. ROLL CALL
2.A ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY

PRESENT: Chair Dan Sullivan, Vice Chair Debbie Ossiander, Pamela Jennings, Dan Coffey, Chris Birch, Janice Shamberg and Dick Traini.
ABSENT: Allan Tesche, Paul Bauer, Anna Fairclough and Ken Stout, each excused.
(Clerk's Note: Allan Tesche and Paul Bauer arrived late.)

2.B. ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD

PRESENT: President Jeff Friedman, Vice President Macon Roberts, Mary Marks, Tim Steele, John Steiner, Crystal Kennedy and Jake Metcalfe.
ABSENT: None.

Also present were Anchorage School District (ASD) Superintendent Carol Comeau, Mayor Begich, Municipal Manager Denis LeBlanc, ASD Assistant Superintendent George Vakalis, ASD Facilities Director Ray Amsden, Deputy Municipal Manager Michael Abbott, ASD Chief Financial Officer Janet Stokesbary, Heritage Land Bank Executive Director Robin Ward and Municipal Clerk Barbara Gruenstein.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Municipal Manager Denis LeBlanc led the pledge.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS JOINT MEETING
4.A. Joint Meeting – September 15, 2006.

Ms. Kennedy moved, to approve the Joint Meeting Minutes of
Mr. Coffey seconded, September 15, 2006,
and this was passed without objection,
with Chair Sullivan, Mr. Traini, Mr. Stout and Mr. Birch abstaining, due to excused absences on that date.

5. ADDENDUM TO AGENDA There were no items.

6. ITEMS OF BUSINESS
6.A. 2007 Legislative Program.

Mr. Metcalfe reported on the ASD Legislative Program which included appropriations for people transportation, debt reimbursement, increased funding for summer school programs, instruction for increased proficiencies for all students, standard-based early learning and student information system. The ASD was addressing mandates that required students to be ready *(for school)* at an earlier age. The ASD was reviewing mandatory attendance and age requirements and was proposing a change, from 7-16 to 6-18 years of age. The ASD supported continued funding for the King Career Center's construction academy and supported workforce development for funding to train students for the future gas line. Mr. Metcalfe stated that he, Mr. Roberts, Mr. Steiner and Mr. Friedman *(as an ex-officio member)*, as members of the Legislative Committee, had addressed the Budget Priorities.

Superintendent Comeau stated the ASD had been working with the 7-year-old requirement, but had never addressed the 18-year-old requirement. Ms. Marks responded the Alaska Association of School Boards (AASB) supported the new age requirements. Mr. Traini stated the Assembly and the ASD needed to speak with one voice, especially when addressing the 18-year-old age matter.

To Mr. Birch, Mr. Metcalfe responded it was unconstitutional to use school vouchers in Alaska. School maintenance was discussed every year and there was much dispute if money would be saved by contracting out. Mr. Steele responded the ASB and the AASB opposed using vouchers. School custodians had a positive academic impact on students and would be costly to replace. Superintendent Comeau responded custodians also acted as security when schools were used in the evening.

To Ms. Jennings, Superintendent Comeau responded she was involved with the Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Statewide Taskforce. Alaska was one of nine states that did not have access to pre-kindergarten instruction. It was not mandatory, but the taskforce recommended standards to better prepare students for kindergarten, with improved socialization skills. Brain development in children, ages 0-5, was profound. Ms. Jennings stated early childhood development was very important and money invested with this age group would be saved from costs of 'corrections' later.

Ms. Marks stated she had operated a home day care and had educated herself to be able to provide an educational environment for children under her care. She supported setting standards for students being ready to enter school.

Mr. Steele stated that the AASB recommended proposing budgets a year ahead of schedule or a two-year budget cycle or both. To Chair Sullivan, Mr. Steele responded that Governor Murkowski and the Legislature had created an account stored for future use, which was earmarked for education.

To Mr. Birch, Mr. Steiner responded the AASB felt the schools were making progress and operating successfully and vouchers were not needed. Competition to provide additional improvement was not needed. The ASD custodians were on a first name basis with students and were the district's eyes and ears. Contracting out ground maintenance could be an option. The AASB would advocate the State of Alaska to resolve the State Public Employees Retirement System and the Teachers Retirement System (*PERS/TRS*) matter. If not resolved, the ASD would be forced to give pink slips to tenured teachers once the budget was proposed.

Mayor Begich stated that the MOA two-year budget had been extremely successful. To Ms. Jennings, he responded the Administration supported the Read to Read Ready to Learn Program, which had shown to have far reaching connections with public safety. The Administration supported the age changes and also supported Charter Schools and alternative options for students. The uniqueness of this school district and the existing competition was good.

Mr. Steele stated that Governor Murkowski and Governor-elect Palin had stated that PERS/TRS would be addressed. The ASD supported working with parents and the community to generate an understanding of the importance of early childhood development. Ms. Shamberg responded that pediatricians may be a great resource to help educate parents and promote early childhood development. Ms. Jennings responded that a recent campaign on community awareness had included hospitals all around the state. Superintendent Comeau stated that the taskforce had addressed the entire community, including the elders, social agencies and parents.

Mr. Birch stated the State should take more responsibility for all education in the state. Chair Sullivan, Mr. Steiner, Mayor Begich and Mr. Metcalfe concurred.

Mr. Metcalfe stated that State Legislators understood the MOA was not taxing to the state-allowed cap. The ASD had calculated the budget was within \$1.7 million of the cap. Superintendent Comeau stated that the ASD was closer to the cap now, than in past years.

6.B. Clark Middle School Design.

Mayor Begich stated the Clark Middle School development was very important to Mountain View. The Administration and the ASD had discussed the school design elements, including the building, traffic, pedestrian flow and integration of the library. Heritage Land Bank Executive Director Robin Ward stated the design addressed redeveloping a school on a smaller site, surrounding transportation routes, security, buffering standards, undergrounding utilities and availability of adjacent parking. To Mr. Traini, Ms. Ward responded the Parks and Recreation Department would be moved to City Hall and that facility would be redeveloped into a community library. Mayor Begich responded there was state grant money set aside for this project.

To Ms. Marks, Superintendent Comeau responded the ASD had concluded the students would not remain in the school while it was under construction and was addressing all options, including busing. The new Begich Middle School would reduced the numbers of students at Clark. Ms. Marks stated the community had asked about bussing their children to other schools. Chair Sullivan responded with the reduced capacity of students at Clark, there would be fewer displaced students.

Ms. Ossiander stated she had opposed the expensive renovation project of incorporating the community library into the school. Superintendent Comeau responded the original plan had been a good idea but there had been numerous unforeseen costs and the library could not be combined. Mr. Amsden responded it had been determined that in order to save money the renovated library needed to be destroyed. Mr. Steele stated the Begich Middle School was ahead of schedule and under budget. Deputy Municipal Manager Michael Abbott responded that he had been assured that the new school entrance using the Creekside access road would be completed by time the school opened.

6.C. Bonds/DEED Capital Improvement Projects List.

Superintendent Comeau stated the process was that the Capital Requests Advisory Committee presented their recommendations of projects to the ASB, public testimony, ASB action on December 11th and the list sent to the Assembly on December 19th.

To Mr. Traini, Superintendent Comeau responded the Legislature and Governor-elect Palin were committed to the ASD Debt Reimbursement Program of 60% and 70%. The ASD would continue lobbying. To Chair Sullivan, she responded the top priority remained Clark Middle School. To Chair Sullivan, Mr. Steele responded there were many improvements needed in the district, but the ASB was acting responsibility and conservatively.

Mr. Steiner stated the ASD Administration would complete their move into the Boniface Mall by January. The current owner had completed the renovations, allowing consolidating of all ASD Administration with no rent increase and no cost to taxpayers. It was a cost savings and a drastic improvement from the previous location. Superintendent Comeau invited Assemblymembers and the Administration to visit. The ASD would host the next Joint Meeting.

6.D. ASD Budget Process.

ASD Chief Financial Officer Janet Stokesbary distributed the Budget Recommendations. Superintendent Comeau stated the recommendations were from 18 budget review teams, to cut 5% from the general fund. The reductions did

not include labor costs, which were still under negotiation. The ASD would receive public input and present the budget proposals to the State of Alaska in January.

Mr. Birch, Chair of the Municipal Audit Committee, reported the committee had addressed charitable contributions. There was a recommendation for \$68,000 for the Covenant House. President Friedman responded that the ASD did not make charitable contributions, and stated the ASD had been in partnership with Covenant House and other agencies to develop their youth reception center. Superintendent Comeau responded that when juveniles were arrested and parents or adults could not be found, the ASD worked with the APD and students were turned over to the Covenant House. Mr. Steiner stated that Covenant House was listed as one of the proposed budget cuts. Ms. Kennedy responded that she had found Covenant House to be valuable. Superintendent Comeau responded the ASD had an on-going relationship with Catholic Social Services, Lutheran Social Services and Covenant House, which provided needed services. She encouraged reviewing other support services options.

To Chair Sullivan, Superintendent Comeau responded the ASD Budget would be presented to the Assembly by March.

7. COMMENTS

Mr. Tesche requested that all Joint Meeting Minutes be posted on the Web.

Mr. Steiner stated the Kenai Borough School District was preparing to sue, because state funds were too low for that area. The ASD belonged to the AASB and litigation of the current lawsuit with the state involved the total state funding package. Education costs in rural districts were being determined, with proposed cost differentials, which the ASD and the ASB would not oppose. Anchorage schools absorbed many rural students moving to Anchorage and it was important that all Alaskan school districts maintain high education standards.

Ms. Marks thanked Assemblymembers, Mayor Begich and the Administration for supporting the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) Convention, organizing volunteers and allowing the use of school buses. She urged representatives to be involved with the conventions, to make the state's problems unified. Chair Sullivan responded it had been a successful convention and they looked forward to having the AFN permanently return to Anchorage in 2008.

Ms. Jennings and Ms. Shamberg supported funding for early childhood education.

Mr. Birch stated that he had heard from many teachers who were concerned with the new Ethics Code requirements. President Friedman stated the ASD was addressing teachers' conflicts of interests, including reporting of second jobs. Chair Sullivan thanked President Friedman for his involvement with the Code rewrite. He had also talked with several teachers who were concerned with declaring second jobs. Superintendent Comeau responded the ASD and the unions would determine reporting requirements. Mr. Metcalfe stated it was a shame that teachers were forced to work second jobs because they were not being paid enough money and requested the matter be addressed in the future.

Superintendent Comeau reported that the Anchorage Education Association (AEA) had distributed pins that read, "I don't want to strike but I will." Legal and professional research had determined the pins to be disruptive in classrooms and teachers had been informed that they were not allowed to wear the pins during classroom instruction.

Mr. Roberts stated that the Clark Middle School reconstruction was expensive, but the new school would be built to last 100-plus years and would have low maintenance. It would be student-friendly, comfortable, built for the climate and built so that future technology could be added. Chair Sullivan concurred and he supported. Mr. Steele stated that the ASD and the ASB took seriously academic achievement, safety, security and accountability. The new Clark Middle School would be sound and it could be used as a backup emergency command center.

Mr. Coffey stated the PERS/TRS matter and the other budget matters would never be resolved until the issue of health care was resolved. This needed to be addressed in the employee contracts. It could not be ignored.

Ms. Kennedy concurred with Mr. Friedman on the Ethics Policy. Municipal Clerk Barbara Gruenstein responded the current amended version of the Ethics Code Ordinance would be available that afternoon for review.

8. SCHEDULING OF THE NEXT JOINT MEETING

Municipal Clerk Barbara Gruenstein announced the next Joint Meeting would be scheduled for sometime in March.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Sullivan adjourned the meeting at noon.

Refer to Document Archives for Signatures

DAN SULLIVAN, Assembly Chair

Refer to Document Archives for Signatures

JEFF FRIEDMAN, Anchorage School Board President

ATTEST:

Refer to Document Archives for Signatures

BARBARA GRUENSTEIN, Municipal Clerk

Date Minutes Approved: March 9, 2007.

MC/BG

(Copies of Approved Meeting Minutes are available from the Municipal Clerk's Office, 632 West 6th Avenue, Suite 250, Anchorage, Alaska, (907)343-4505, or on the Municipal Web Site, www.muni.org ~Assembly~Minutes~year~month~day)