

1 The agenda was approved with the requested addition.
2
3

4 **6. ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

5 **6.a. Joint Legislative Education Funding Task Force Update**

6
7
8 Mr. Friedman reported that the legislature had held education task force meetings over the summer to delve into the
9 issue of education funding. The meetings included both public discussion and debate. One question of particular
10 concern to Anchorage which was raised at the meetings was the local contribution. The issue which continues to be a
11 concern particularly among legislators from rural districts is that Anchorage does not pay enough taxes to support
12 education. Mr. Friedman believed that task force members were convinced that the issue regarding local contributions
13 was more complex than could be dealt with during the summer meetings and that they plan to continue to investigate it
14 as a long term issue.
15

16 The Task Force did make several recommendations that will help the district budget quite a bit in terms of funding for
17 high needs special education students, revamping the transportation funding formula, and recommending increases to
18 the base student allocation amount. Those recommendations look good but they still must go to the legislature for final
19 approval. Mr. Friedman noted that even if all of the recommendations are adopted the district's long term projections
20 still show shortfalls in terms of funding current programs. He believed that the rapidly increasing property
21 assessments are a large contributing factor to problem. The higher the local property assessments are, the less
22 money the district receives in state funding. If property assessments continue to increase at 10% per year the district
23 is in trouble; if they start leveling out things will be better. The preliminary projections indicate that the district will have
24 a shortfall going into the next budget year.
25

26 Ms. Comeau noted that the series of task force meetings were the most transparent government functioning that she
27 has ever experienced. All of the meetings were open and all of the documentation is available to the public.
28 Representative Hawker, along with Senator Johnny Ellis and Representative Bob Roses, did an exceptionally good job
29 of representing the issues from Anchorage while really looking and listening to issues from around rural Alaska. The
30 entire report is up on the House Majority website. There are a number of issues that still need to be addressed
31 including the local property tax share. The 4 mil requirement that's in the formula works against Anchorage.
32 Anchorage now has a 3 mil contribution based on any increases from 1999 to now which amounts to only a 50%
33 increase rather than the entire amount. There is much work left to do in order to convince people that an increase in
34 property assessment should not cause growing communities like Anchorage to be penalized. Ms. Comeau indicated
35 that this issue really needs full debate and discussion among the legislature. The Joint Education Funding Task Force
36 deferred this and a number of other issues from immediate action and will recommend that legislative leadership
37 appoint standing committees in both the House and the Senate to grapple with those very serious issues during the
38 regular legislative session.
39

40 Dr. Selkregg noted her interest in knowing what the per-student local contribution is and how Anchorage compares to
41 other places in terms of that contribution. There is an implication that Anchorage does not pay their fair share and it
42 would seem valuable to have the data available to make a comparison. Ms. Stokesbary indicated that she did not
43 have that figure but that it could be calculated.
44

45 **6.b. Adequate Yearly Progress (NCLB) Update for ASD**

46
47 Ms. Comeau reported that the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) results from the last school year are now available
48 and distributed the report to all those present. The district is particularly proud of the enormous improvement seen
49 when comparing this year's results to those from 2003, the first year of NCLB. The report includes a chart showing a
50 school-by-school analysis of whether they made AYP and, if they did not, why. Ms. Comeau explained that there are
51 thirty-one categories that must be met in order for the school to make AYP. Comparing the charts it is easy to identify
52 the significant growth over the last four years. The obvious improvement is a real testament to the focused efforts
53 being made by teachers, staff, parents and students across the district. The area that the district continues to struggle
54 with is the category of Students with Disabilities. Ms. Comeau explained that what frustrates school districts around
55 the country is that, by definition, students have to be two years behind grade level in order to qualify for special
56 education and yet the law requires that, by 2014, 100% of the students have to meet 100% proficiency on grade level
57 assessment. This issue will continue to be worked on through the upcoming reauthorization of NCLB. Ms. Comeau
58 noted that she had shared this report with Senator Murkowski and Secretary Spellings last week and that they were
59 pleased to see the progress being made.
60

1 Mr. Coffey asked what efforts are being made to address some of the noted issues that appear to require modifications
2 to the law. Ms. Comeau explained that Sen. Murkowski is now on the Senate Health, Labor, Education, and Pension
3 committee and on a subcommittee that is working on the reauthorization NCLB. The district has provided Sen.
4 Murkowski with a great deal of information regarding these issues. In addition, the district is part of the Council of
5 Great City Schools. The urban districts involved with that organization have come together to provide statements
6 regarding their major areas of concern. In addition, the National School Boards Association has also provided input.
7 Mr. Steele noted that the Alaska delegation is really up on the issues regarding NCLB. Mr. Coffey asked if there was
8 any information available regarding the cost incurred in relation to NCLB, even just the cost of the reporting
9 requirements. Ms. Comeau noted that we do not have cost information. She explained that it is not just NCLB. There
10 are many assessment requirements coming down from the state that are all being rolled in together with federal
11 requirements.

12
13 Mr. Sullivan congratulated the district on the significant progress that they have made. He acknowledged that, when
14 NCLB was first implemented, it was a very controversial program and there was concern about insufficient funding. He
15 believed that what NCLB has done, however, is proven that demanding accountability does work. He noted that it
16 should be the responsibility of any public institution that spends tax dollars to prove to the tax payers that the money is
17 being spent wisely.

18
19 Dr. Selkregg asked whether the report from 2003 and the report from 2007 used exactly the same criteria in each one
20 of the measurements or if there had been a revision of the criteria. Ms. Comeau explained that the Standards Based
21 Assessments have changed but the proficiency bar, by law, goes up every three years. What that means is that there
22 was a lower level required to reach proficiency in 2003 than there is now. Ms. Gardner noted that over the last three
23 years, during which time the criteria has remained the same, every single NCLB subgroup is improving in Language
24 Arts and Math.

25
26 Ms. Johnston asked what the consequences are when a school is designated at different levels. Ms. Comeau
27 explained that only Title I schools experience serious consequences. Every school does have to issue an annual
28 report card and must say that they did not make Adequate Yearly Progress and explain what they are doing about it.

29
30 Mr. Steiner explained that Annual Yearly Progress each year is dependent upon achieving a certain percentage at the
31 annual measurable objective. The annual measurable objective is adjusted about every three years. This coming
32 year there will be a big jump which means that the same performance this year will fall short next year. It is also true
33 that some of these categories made adequate yearly progress not because they actually had achieved the annual
34 measurable objective but because they achieved safe harbor. Safe harbor is achieved when the school experiences a
35 ten percent improvement even if that improvement does not meet the annual measurable objective. This is important
36 information to keep in mind when the report comes out next year in order to recognize that progress can be made at
37 the same time the results of making AYP may look worse.

38 39 **6.c. Six-Year Instructional Plan**

40
41 Ms. Kennedy asked that this item be put on the agenda in order to make sure that members of the Assembly are
42 aware that the district has a six year instructional plan. She explained that this document is the strategic plan that the
43 district uses to move forward in the whole effort to make Adequate Yearly Progress. The document is broken down by
44 individual departments and spells out what each department believes that it will take to reach the desired proficiency
45 level. The plan is the result of a community-wide effort to address some of the recommendations made after a
46 curriculum audit conducted in 2003. The document is truly the blue print that the district uses to make decisions to
47 achieve student success. Departments across the district use this document to set goals and to make budgetary
48 decisions. Mr. Steele added that the document is designed around board goals and that the board will modify those
49 goals as necessary after the Profile of Performance is reviewed in late October.

50
51 Dr. Selkregg noted that the state goal for graduation rate is 55.5% and indicated that she does not believe that to be
52 an acceptable goal. The focus of the educational system should be successful graduation from high school. She
53 would like to see the district raise that goal and make it a critical priority. Ms. Comeau agreed that graduation rates are
54 of critical importance. She noted that the 55.5% rate is the state goal required to meet minimum proficiency. The
55 district goal is that 100% of our students will graduate from high school. Ms. Comeau noted that part of the problem is
56 that the compulsory education age in Alaska is only sixteen. One of the district's legislative priorities last year was to
57 increase the age to eighteen or achieving a high school diploma. Ms. Comeau also noted that the district is looking at
58 ways to change the last couple of years of high school to make them as meaningful as possible to each student and
59 the student's individual plans and goals.

1 Ms. Johnston voiced her support for enforced truancy as she believed that simply raising the age of compulsory
2 education will not solve the problem. She would like to see the community promoting enforced truancy and perhaps
3 have some system to tie student truancy to their guardian. Mr. Steele noted that there is currently legislation being
4 discussed which addresses both truancy and the compulsory education age. He explained that another part of the
5 problem is the definition of dropouts. If students simply do not show up they are categorized as dropouts without
6 regard to where the student actually is or if they are enrolled in another program. Efforts are being made to track the
7 paperwork on those students in order to more accurately reflect true dropout numbers. Ms. Comeau also added that,
8 in this state, home schooled students are considered dropouts.
9

10 Dr. Selkregg noted that good parents can have students who misbehave and indicated that we must be very careful in
11 determining how we handle the issue of truancy. While she indicated that she definitely believed in accountability she
12 noted that the issue is very complex and should be approached with caution.
13

14 **6.d. Proposal for Changing School Board Elections**

15
16 Mr. Sullivan noted that there had been one Elections Committee meeting. He explained that, at the present time, this
17 issue is a discussion item only and nothing has been introduced for action. They are simply kicking around ideas to try
18 to find ways to make elections more meaningful and to increase voter turnout. He explained that some community
19 councils have expressed a disconnect between the average tax payer and school board member because school
20 board members are not elected to a particular district the way that assembly members are. The desire is to see if
21 there is a way to improve that connection. He believed that it may make sense to have all at-large school board
22 members in smaller school districts but that in larger school districts, particularly in geographically larger school
23 districts, geographic district representation makes more sense. His thought is that, rather than looking at this as
24 something that politicizes the issue, district representation would bring expertise from the diverse areas across the
25 school district to the board.
26

27 Mr. Sullivan reported that there is also some discussion regarding eliminating one election cycle from the municipal
28 election schedule. That would result in having six assembly members and four school board members up for election
29 one year. The next year the remaining five assembly members, three school board members, and the mayor would be
30 on the ballot. That action could save the cost of an entire election. Mr. Sullivan indicated that these are just thought
31 processes and voiced his appreciation for all of the input the committee has received so far. A date has not yet been
32 set for the next committee meeting but it will probably take place some time next week. Mr. Sullivan recognized that
33 there is little support for these changes on the part of school board members.
34

35 Mr. Steele acknowledged that board member knowledge of different geographic areas throughout the district is a valid
36 point and is, in fact, the reason that every year board members change geographic areas of emphasis. That rotation
37 helps every board member become familiar with families all over the district and with the variety of issues that are
38 important to them.
39

40 Ms. Marks asked whether there had been any discussion regarding appointment versus election of school board
41 members. She noted that some districts in the lower forty-eight appoint school board members and that the practice
42 does not work. Mr. Sullivan reported that there had not been any discussion on that topic.
43

44 Mr. Roberts noted the importance of keeping the number of school board members up for election in any given cycle
45 low in order to assure continuity of experience. Mr. Roberts also noted that in his travels and discussions around the
46 country he has found that geographic representation on school boards is not very desirable and very few people like it.
47

48 **6.e. Items to be Considered by the Current Assembly/School Board Committee**

49
50 Ms. Johnson noted that she is currently chair of the Joint Assembly/School Board committee. She felt that there is a
51 very healthy competition between the municipality and the school district and would like to see something positive
52 result from that competition. She believed that one area that would benefit is that of shared services. She noted the
53 need to be accountable to the constituents as far as the budget process. Both assembly members and board
54 members need to do due diligence and the community needs to see cooperation between the bodies in budget
55 matters.
56

57 Dr. Selkregg indicated that the budget is a big issue and it is reasonable to expect that members of both bodies would
58 want to work on it together. She emphasized the importance of looking at the issue as educational rather than
59 adversarial. She identified the need to understand the intellectual framework in the budget.
60

1 Mr. Friedman noted that it seems like the issue of cooperation and shared services comes up every year. Everyone
2 seems to agree that it is a good idea but little action is taken. He suggested that one particular item should be chosen
3 to work on rather than trying to address everything at once or simply engaging in general conversation. On the topic of
4 the budget, Mr. Friedman indicated that assembly members would benefit from attending the two days of the district
5 budget hearings where staff members present the proposed budgets for their individual departments. He believed that
6 would offer the best opportunity for assembly members to really understand the process of how the school district
7 budget is prepared.

8
9 Ms. Johnson noted that selecting one or two items or departments to look at in regards to shared services to see if
10 some type of procedure could be established would be a good activity for the Joint Assembly/School Board committee
11 to undertake.

12
13 Mr. Steiner noted that this committee has not met to date but, with the site selection proposal before the Assembly now
14 and with the possibility of selecting some services for creative review, it is time for them to meet. He suggested that a
15 meeting be scheduled in order to get a briefing on the implication and nature of the site selection process and hear the
16 progress on that matter. He also suggested having Mr. LeBlanc and Mr. Vakalis attend in order to participate in the
17 discussion to identify items that might benefit from shared services.

18
19 Mr. Coffey believed that the work load is great for members of both of these bodies and one of the reasons for
20 adopting and supporting the committee process is to share that work load. The goal is to collectively find ways to
21 advance the goals and objectives. He voiced his appreciation for the efforts by members involved in this process.

22
23 Mr. Starr noted his agreement that the committee process does work. As chair of the Budget and Finance committee
24 he committed to attending the school district budget hearings and to bringing his committee. He noted that they do
25 look at every line and it is helpful to look at both the municipal budget and the district budget to see the similarities.
26 The challenge is to have the dialogue at the next level.

27
28 Ms. Kennedy mentioned that the budget presentations are scheduled for January 22, 2008 and January 23, 2008 from
29 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on each day. Ms. Comeau noted that the meetings are also taped and televised on Channel 14
30 so even if people can't attend they can still get the information.

31 32 **6.f. Assembly Budget Committee Recommendation and the Impact on ASD Budget**

33
34 Mr. Teche directed a question to the Assembly Budget and Finance committee. He noted that assembly members had
35 just today received a communication from that committee indicating a proposed resolution that they are considering
36 bringing forward to the Assembly for action which would set goals or guidelines for the municipal budget to be
37 considered this fall as deliberations are held before the adoption of the 2008-2009 bi-annual budget. The resolution
38 contains a number of findings including that Anchorage residents are heavily burdened by real property taxes and
39 have basically reached the levels of tolerance. As far as the action items on the resolution, Mr. Teche understood that
40 the most important item is one which sets forth budget policy for the Assembly to consider, and perhaps adopt, which
41 indicates the Assembly, as the ultimate source of action or legislation on appropriations, will not appropriate any more
42 for the general government operating budget than was done last year. This is an ambitious goal and one that is
43 obviously intended to reduce the burden of property taxes on this community. Mr. Teche explained that if that were to
44 be implemented they would not be able to fund new programs or inflationary increases in existing programs without
45 making changes or adjustments to existing programs absent, of course, new money coming in.

46
47 Mr. Teche explained that the reason that he brought up this matter at this time and in this forum is his belief that if the
48 Assembly is interested in setting out this sort of budget policy and is truly interested in reducing or halting the increase
49 in property taxes then the question of the school district budget should also be addressed. The school district budget
50 as a portion of the Anchorage budget in general is ever increasing and if people are serious about holding the line on
51 government spending then both budgets should be looked at simultaneously. He believed that Assembly members,
52 particularly those that believe that this type of policy is appropriate, should get involved in the school district's budget
53 process early on so that this type of policy does not come as a surprise to the school district when their fiscal plan is
54 brought to the Assembly early next year for the following school year.

55
56 Mr. Teche asked the Assembly Budget and Finance committee whether they are going to consider a proposed
57 resolution of this sort that addresses a school district policy and, if so, whether they plan to share their intentions
58 regarding the amount of funding that will be available with the school district in advance. He wanted to avoid having
59 the district go through a six month process to develop a fiscal plan only to find out that the Assembly had approved a

1 budget policy that treats them as one with the municipality. Mr. Teche asked whether the committee will consider the
2 school district in the proposed resolution.

3 Mr. Starr, reporting as chair of the Budget and Finance committee, noted that the committee had held a meeting last
4 week where they addressed the chairman's request to tender, by September 11th, a policy statement from the
5 committee which specifically addresses the upcoming operating and capital budgets of the administration. The
6 resolution specifically addresses the evaluation process for the operating budget as well as a policy stance related to
7 that operating budget. He indicated that if the committee were asked to entertain and provide a policy statement
8 directive to the Assembly they would do so. At this time they have only been asked to tender a policy recommendation
9 for consideration as it relates to that topic.

10
11 Mr. Teche asked the Chairman Coffey if he intends to ask Mr. Starr and the Budget and Finance committee to address
12 the issue of an overall policy for the school district similar to the one the committee has announced for the general
13 government budget. In all fairness to the school district, Mr. Teche believed that the information should be clearly
14 provided so that the school board will know the Assembly stance as early in the process as possible.

15
16 Mr. Coffey indicated his belief that Mr. Teche's concern had been addressed when Mr. Starr indicated that he and his
17 committee would be delighted to work with Mr. Friedman and other board members relative to the budget. He
18 explained that the Assembly's role in the school district budget is vastly different than their role in the operating budget
19 of the municipality. At some point it may be appropriate to ask for a policy statement but Mr. Coffey believed that
20 asking for it today would be premature.

21
22 Mr. Friedman noted that the Assembly ultimately votes on the total dollar value of local, state, and federal monies. He
23 explained that there is a big difference between limiting growth in the local contribution and limiting the total local, state
24 and federal monies. He indicated that he would be extremely concerned if the Assembly begins discussing limiting the
25 amount of money that the district can accept from the state or the federal government because they are worried about
26 property taxes. While he does have some concern with the idea of limiting the local contributions he does believe that
27 such an action would be a legitimate topic of discussion.

28
29 Mayor Begich explained that he has not yet seen the resolution in question but wanted to make it clear to the school
30 district that they do not intend to propose a budget that is equal to last year's budget. He noted that the district should
31 pay very close attention to the municipal budget as it has direct relationship to many programs that are supported in
32 partnership with the district. Even though it is a general government policy that is being addressed, the school district
33 has a vested interest in it.

34
35 Mr. Teche thanked Mr. Coffey and expressed his hope that any similar policy pronouncement from the Assembly
36 Budget and Finance committee will be requested and will be forthcoming if the committee intends to set out any sort of
37 a policy that will have an impact on funding for the 2008-2009 school district budget. It is very important to recognize
38 that what is done in general government, especially if guided by policy, is going to affect the school board. He urged
39 members of the school board and the administration to keep an eye on this process so as to make appropriate
40 assumptions when building their budget.

41
42 Ms. Comeau voiced her appreciation for this discussion. She recognized that this is a good topic of discussion for the
43 Joint Assembly/School Board committee and welcomed the opportunity to be able to hear more about the issue. She
44 noted that the district does make assumptions about the level of local taxes that can be built into the budget. She
45 expressed her appreciation for the support of the assembly and the mayor, over her tenure as superintendent, on
46 going to the upper limit of the budget allowed under the tax cap. Ms. Comeau and Mr. Steele both indicated their
47 desire for the district and the board to be included in the ongoing conversation on this topic. It is extremely important
48 that the district clearly understand what the ramifications are as they proceed through their budget development
49 process.

50
51 **6.g. Superintendent's Report**

52
53 Ms. Comeau reported that the district has had a very successful start to the school year. The enrollment is at about
54 98.77% of the projected number. Numbers are down particularly at the elementary level. Other districts around the
55 state are also reporting decreases in enrollment from expected levels. It is difficult to ascertain the reasons for the
56 decline but the district is watching the numbers very closely. Ms. Comeau noted that the district will be making staffing
57 adjustments throughout the district as needed based on enrollment at the various locations to stabilize class size.

58
59 Ms. Comeau extended her appreciation to the police department and others who assisted with the recent incident at
60 Russian Jack Elementary School.

1 **6.h. Mayor's Report**

2
3 Mayor Begich reported that he had given a memorandum to assembly members regarding a couple of issues that they
4 will be dealing with upcoming. One of those issues is the 3500 Tudor Road development plan which has been in front
5 of Planning and Zoning committee and should move to the Assembly in October or November. The district has a
6 transportation site at that location and the municipality has been working with the district on that plan.

7
8 Mayor Begich noted that the merger meetings between Municipal Light & Power and the Chugach Electric Association
9 are going very well. He anticipated that Phase One will be done by mid-October. Phase One will determine whether
10 there is one or two valid models that they can move forward with. One of the outstanding questions which will need to
11 be addressed is the capital credit issue. As a major customer, the district has a vested interest in the outcome of that
12 discussion. Mayor Begich recognized that one of the largest budget items for the school district, besides personnel
13 issues, is energy costs and indicated that the outcome of the merger meetings may have a long term effect, hopefully
14 in a positive way. He anticipated that reaching a solution will result in rate stabilization.

15
16 **7. COMMENTS**

17
18 Mr. Coffey commented that the cooperative effort that these two bodies are engaged in, on all fronts, is beneficial and
19 should continue.

20
21 Mr. Starr reported that he had attended the Department of Transportation meeting where the Yosemite Drive issue was a
22 topic of discussion. A resolution will be brought forward urging DNR policy statements to be clearer for that drainage
23 system. He also reported from that meeting that the flashing yellow lights in the Alpenglow Elementary School area
24 should be turned on soon.

25
26 **8. SCHEDULING OF UPCOMING JOINT MEETING(S)**

27
28 The next joint meeting of the Assembly and the Anchorage School Board will be scheduled for Friday, December 14,
29 2007. The meeting will be held in the Mayor's Conference Room in City Hall.

30
31 **9. ADJOURNMENT** President Steele adjourned the meeting at 3:28 p.m.

32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39 _____
DAN COFFEY, Assembly Chair

TIM STEELE, Anchorage School Board President

40
41 ATTEST:

42
43
44
45
46
47 _____
JOHANNA LEE, Anchorage School Board Secretary

48 Date Minutes Approved: December 14, 2007.

49 TS/jjl

50
51 *(Approved Meeting Minutes are available in the Municipal Clerk's Office, 632 West 6th Avenue, Suite 250, Anchorage, Alaska;*
52 *telephone (907)343-4311 or on the Municipal Website, muni.org ~ Assembly/Clerk ~ Assembly Meeting Minutes ~ year ~ date.)*