

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

**Mayor's Conference Room
632 West Sixth Avenue**

Minutes for Joint Meeting of November 21, 2008

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Joint Meeting of November 21, 2008 was convened by Assembly Chair Claman at 12:00 p.m. in the Mayor's Conference Room, 8th Floor, City Hall, Room 830, 632 West 6th Avenue, in Anchorage, Alaska.

2. ROLL CALL A Quorum was achieved with Assemblymembers and School Board Members present.

2.A ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY

PRESENT: Patrick Flynn (*arriving at 12:10*), Elvi Gray-Jackson, Harriet Drummond, William Starr (*arriving at 12:05*), Matt Claman, Sheila Selkregg (*arriving at 12:03*), Jennifer Johnston (*arriving at 12:02*), Chris Birch, Mike Gutierrez, Debbie Osslander (*arriving at 12:45*) and Dan Coffey.

ABSENT: None.

2.B. ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD

PRESENT: Jeff Friedman, Chris Tuck (*arriving at 12:07*), Tim Steele, Crystal Kennedy, Pat Higgins and John Steiner.

ABSENT: Macon Roberts, excused.

Also present were Anchorage School District (ASD) Superintendent Carol Comeau, Mayor Mark Begich, Municipal Clerk Barbara Gruenstein, Municipal Manager Michael Abbott and Chief Fiscal Officer Sharon Weddleton.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Assemblymember Drummond led the pledge.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS JOINT MEETING

4.A. Joint Meeting – September 5, 2008.

President Friedman moved, to approve the Joint Meeting Minutes of
Mr. Steiner seconded, September 5, 2008.
and this was passed without objection,
with Mr. Roberts as an excused absence.

5. ADDENDUM TO AGENDA

Chair Claman reported that the publicly noticed Agenda had included School Bonds as Agenda item 6.B, which would be the topic discussed. There were no objections.

6. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

6.A. ASD Budget.

Superintendent Comeau reported the finalized 2009 Anchorage School District (ASD) Budget included an increased number of children from rural Alaska, the Lower 48, immigrants and the military. The military indicated there would be 3000 military arriving over the next three years. There would also be increased costs for utilities and additional staff and the ASD would be looking for areas to cut costs. Mr. Coffey stated that Public Hearing would be open on the ASD Budget when it was before the Assembly in March. To Mr. Birch, Superintendent Comeau responded the projected student enrollment was 48,548.

6.B. [School Site Selection] ASD Bonds.

Superintendent Comeau reported the District had not yet recommended a bond package to the School Board. Service High School would be the priority project. There was consideration of a design for Girdwood School and other building renewal projects to meet Code standards. A Dittman Survey would test different recommendations to help determine what would be proposed. The District was very aware of the state of the economy and it was difficult to anticipate what bonds would pass. The District was eligible for State debt reimbursement for two more years.

To Mr. Steiner, Mayor Begich responded that the Mat-Su Valley and Fairbanks had decreased home evaluations, but Anchorage property appraisals had been fairly stable. Chief Fiscal Officer Sharon Weddleton stated that it was predicted that property assessed evaluations in Anchorage would remain flat, as a whole.

1 To Ms. Gray-Jackson, Mr. Coffey responded the mill rate would be affected when the bonds were sold. Flat home
2 assessments would increase the mill rate. Ms. Weddleton responded that it was the debt service repayment that
3 triggered a change to the mill rate. Superintendent Comeau responded the ASD would be paying off \$46,000,000
4 million of bonds and the Capital Request Committee had recommended a smaller *(bond)* package. The ASD felt that
5 that was a good approach, even though there were many schools that needed upgrades. Mr. Coffey stated that
6 recommendations could be discussed, along with the interest rates. With the state of the economy, caution was
7 needed.

8
9 Mr. Steele stated that the State had indicated that the city was \$4.5 million below the state cap. Mayor Begich stated
10 the State Constitution dictated that the State of Alaska fund education to the fullest extent. The State was not doing
11 their constitutional duty and needed to take their mandated obligations seriously and pay for education. It was not right
12 to set a formula for standards that was unrealistic. Mr. Steele stated that the Legislature's committees would address
13 the question of local contributions. He would continue to argue that all local contributions needed to be included with
14 the consideration. Mayor Begich stated the discussion needed to be based on the constitution requirements. Mr. Tuck
15 stated that he would be in Juneau to address the funding level that was necessary to meet the Constitutional
16 requirements. Mr. Steele stated the court had stated that education was a state responsibility, but had also concluded
17 that the funding was adequate. Ms. Johnston stated the Alaska Municipal League (AML) was also addressing the
18 State's constitutional requirements. Mr. Friedman stated that not going to the cap would affect lobbying. Ms. Johnston
19 responded it was a simple debate and members needed to remember that there would not be a huge impact on the
20 budget. The constitutional issue would continue to be discussed for years.

21
22 To Dr. Selkregg, Mayor Begich responded that it had always been argued that the State needed to provide adequate
23 funding for education. The difference now was that the State set the standards of what was needed to graduate, which
24 determined the level of funding that was adequate. The argument now was that adequate funding was not being
25 provided.

26
27 Ms. Drummond recalled the 1997 ASD \$3 million budget cut and wondered whether it had affected the tax cap and the
28 contribution level. Mr. Steele responded the tax rate had been about the same. The No Child Left Behind federal
29 mandate spelled out the city's responsibilities. Superintendent Comeau responded the Children's With Disabilities Act
30 also had extraordinary mandates and minimal federal funding that significantly affected the ASD and every school
31 district in the nation.

32
33 To Mr. Coffey, Mayor Begich responded there was no simple answer how to deal with the debt that had been created
34 in the past three or four years. Education needed to be reestablished as a priority. The No Child Left Behind mandate
35 was not properly funded. Congress had not supported the auto industry bailout because there was no long term
36 strategy and would be taking a more cautious approach to investing money. The No Child Left Behind program
37 needed to be thrown out. Accountability and access standards could be designed by local communities.

38
39 Mr. Steiner stated that it was generally thought to be more appropriate to adjust the cost differential formula rather than
40 increase the base student allocation. There was question whether the formula was being recognized across the nation
41 and how federal funding was distributed. Mayor Begich responded that the State's responsibility was being discussed,
42 but was not being challenged. A friendly lawsuit would help determine the fundamental definition of an adequate
43 education. The Legislature needed a vote of NO confidence. Mr. Steiner requested the ASB be kept informed if the
44 Assembly took a position to be able to work together when addressing the matter.

45
46 To Ms. Drummond, Superintendent Comeau responded that Congress had eliminated Medicare funding in April, 2008.
47 A total reimbursement of nearly \$1 million had been expected.

48
49 Mr. Birch stated that during his six years with the Fairbanks Assembly they had initiated litigation for the State to pay
50 for education. The State had the fundamental responsibility for providing education. The Washington State
51 Legislature kept passing laws to throw more people in jail but had refused to build more jails. The Legislature was
52 found to be in contempt and was ordered to build more facilities. He supported proceeding with litigation to address
53 the State's obligation of paying for education.

54
55 Ms. Johnston stated that the State had set the student dropout age at 16. Suspension and expulsion needed to be
56 addressed. A child with eleven unexcused absences was dropped from the class. She knew of a teacher who put a
57 student in the hallway when that student was too far behind. Rules were pretty loose. A teacher could send a
58 disruptive student to the office. Instead of kicking kids out, they should be in a supervised in-school suspension
59 program, in a room set at 60 degrees, doing homework. Some parents were not responsible and dropout kids often
60 had no home to go to. Mr. Friedman stated that funding would be a concern and a new program would require cuts
61 elsewhere. The city and the state were not meeting their obligations. Mr. Coffey stated that the Legislative Committee
62 would be supportive if the ASB set in-school suspension as a priority. Superintendent Comeau responded the ASB
63 had approved hiring a graduation coach for every high school to identify and intervene with struggling 9th graders who
64 were not on track. Graduation coaches were needed in middle and elementary schools. A large portion of resources
65 were used for high achievers and it was a balancing act to reach the low achievers. It was challenging to find out what
66 else was going on in student's lives. A growing number of kids from families were encouraged to go to work. An Anti-
67 Gang Prevention Violence Task Force also dealt with expelled, violent or dangerous kids who needed to be in a
68 secure program. Dr. Selkregg stated that there were high costs for losing a student. She urged that students not be
69 kicked out of school. The Anchorage Youth Succeed in School and Life Program was actively identifying and
70 intervening with students dropping out. The city, working with the ASD, needed to challenge the State's responsibility.

71
72 Mr. Starr stated that the School District (ASD), Municipal and State fiscal calendars occurred at different times of the
73 year. Getting an ASD year-end financial status would help create a clear picture. Coordinating efforts to share all
74 practical knowledge and information would assist when addressing bonded indebtedness, posting bonds and the mill
75 rate. To Dr. Selkregg, Mayor Begich responded that ASD budget information would only be a calculation based on a
76 prediction and was too incomplete to use. To Mr. Coffey, Mayor Begich responded there was question whether a
77 Charter Amendment or changing the calendar year would improve the system.

Mr. Steele supported Mr. Starr's idea of gaining knowledge by sharing as much detailed information as possible. Dropout and expulsion numbers had steadily declined over the years. There was now at a 4.2% dropout rate, which was below the 8% state average. There was still concern with violent students, which needed to be removed from the classroom. Most schools had in-school suspension. To foster the success of kids there were many things to consider. State law held schools responsible for the graduation rate, but supported the dropout age, which the ASD had lobbied to change for the past eight years.

Mr. Flynn stated that it was difficult to ensure that kids were in school. There was a student population that showed up during the first few weeks of school, but disappeared once the verification check was done. Superintendent Comeau stated that school counselors and principals were deeply frustrated and felt that parents who were on public assistance should be held accountable to see that their children were in school. All agencies needed to be involved to ensure student attendance, rather than the ASD alone. Mr. Flynn stated that he had recommended submitting monthly attendance records to Juneau. Superintendent Comeau responded there were federal privacy laws. The ASD met quarterly with the State Office of Children Services (OCS) and was working on a student information system that would allow more information to be shared. ASD resource officers conducted home visits when they had time and there were multiple ways for the information to be shared. Some parents had no leave time and older children stayed home to babysit children who were sick, so parents would not miss work. Families needed a back up and it needed to be a community effort. The ASD was working with the United Way Anti-Violence and Anti-Gang Task Force, which was addressing some of these issues.

Mr. Tuck stated it needed to be a community effort. Senator Murkowski's Education Forum held November 15th and 16th had focused on topics of relativity and connectiveness. Some students went through dozens of foster homes. The ASD offered connectiveness which related to student rates of violence, pregnancies and dropouts. The ASD Minority Education Concerns Advisory Committee addressed how teachers were trained to handle disruptive students in the classroom. It was a balancing act. In some cases suspensions or expulsions were needed because disruptive students would sacrifice the education and safety of other students. McLaughlin assisted, but would not accept violent students. He had recommended to the father of a student in trouble that he monitor his son 24 hours a day. Students with disruptive backgrounds needed the most focus. The ASD would have nine graduation coaches to focus on those students and increase their success for graduation. He supported Mayor Begich's focus on state funding for education. Governor Palin was setting education as a priority, with an increase to the state student base allocation. But the added \$100 per student would not keep up with increased costs. When budgets decrease successful programs like the Social and Emotional Learning Program would be eliminated. Students would stay engaged and be benefited for the rest of their lives from skills learned through career and technical education.

Ms. Johnston requested updates on the Recycling Program and the Snow Removal Pilot Program. Superintendent Comeau responded the Recycling Program was doing well. The new Recycling Coordinator worked with the students and by the end of the year would involve all schools. She responded that the ASD would soon be addressing the Snow Removal Pilot Program, negotiating with the Teamsters and the ASD Maintenance Division.

Mr. Steiner stated the dropout rate was a difficult issue for allocation of resources. Some courses were inappropriate and irrelevant to kids who did not see themselves going onto college. Those kids needed more of a reason to be in school to participate and to graduate. Students needed help getting past the barriers created at home, if they had a home. Allocation of resources and community involvement were needed to address students at risk as a top priority.

Mr. Friedman reported an ASD Budget worksession would be held on January 20th and 21st at the ASD Boardroom. He reported the census statistics showed that the graduation rate was as high as it had ever been, but it was clear that a segment of students still needed to be reached. The importance of a diploma had changed over the past 100 years and was now more valuable than it used to be.

Ms. Gray-Jackson stated that the budgets of the Municipal Government and the ASD were uniquely different and should not be addressed at the same time.

Mr. Birch stated that former East High student and phenomenal athlete Laura Ingram had attended 18 foster homes and had survived and become successful because of sports programs. There was not a lot of discussion about dropouts or expulsions at Parent Teacher Association Meetings. New rules limited student access to libraries after school hours and there should be consideration of combining municipal and school libraries and resources. He and Mr. Tuck had recently attended the Resource Development Council Meetings where there was much discussion about workforce development. The King Career Center provided good technical skills. Superintendent Comeau responded that libraries open after school involved extending staff hours and a liability issue when using volunteer staff. The King Career Center now had three shifts and was at capacity all day, after school and all summer. Kids were interested in taking more classes in their own schools. Efforts were increasing to begin career and technical education and entry level instruction courses in the high schools. But, technical equipment was expensive. Kids needed a higher level of education, which included trade or apprentice colleges, other training or the military. The proposed gas line and other oil development projects may create jobs opportunities for adequately trained students.

Ms. Ossiander stated that attendance and dropouts had been ongoing for many years. She applauded the ASD's efforts to keep classrooms safe. There was much controversy over the use of suspension and more information was needed. Truancy officers were once considered. The Assembly had recently approved a grant allocation that targeted homelessness and low income. Superintendent Comeau responded that the 10-day suspension rule was no longer mandatory. There were resource officers, but no truancy officers. OCS authorities believed that school attendance was a low priority. Shared information and collaboration among agencies was needed to complete case management to determine family information to qualify families for services. The ASD contributed to student transportation for the over 2,000 homeless students. Ms. Ossiander stated that it would take working collaboratively to advocate for statutory changes.

Mr. Higgins stated that the dropout and graduation rates were being addressed, but the solution was being piecemealed. The issue could be addressed as early as elementary school. There were other issues, including language, moving students forward, holding kids back, new students being on different levels, transportation, socioeconomics or

1 institutional poverty. Students working their way up needed as many resources as those who were dropping out.
2 Vocational-technical education did not work without transportation. Senator Murkowski's recent subcommittee meeting
3 had accurately addressed the need for post-secondary education for vocational-technical classes, like carpentry career
4 students needing math. Changing the dropout rate would take funds and resources and the State of Alaska needed to
5 step up. Looking at a group of students, it was difficult to pick out the 3 out of 10 that would drop out. A commitment
6 needed to be made to get the resources and funding. With the large classes, teachers did not have time to sit down
7 and talk with the students. There was no reason for these kids to fail. All alternatives needed to be reviewed. He did
8 not want to have to build more prisons to replace what needed to be done with students in the school system. Kids not
9 succeeding would cost society more. This was a national issue that needed to be addressed.

10
11 Dr. Selkregg stated that priorities, resources and costs needed to be determined. The entire community needed to
12 realize it required a shared obligation to raise good and healthy children. It would take raising the issue and having
13 community involvement in order for this to work. New structures needed to be developed to organize Anchorage's
14 resources and to know how and where the different programs were needed. She would support working with the ASD
15 to first understand what was needed and then working as a team to review the municipal budget and create effective
16 before and after school programs with community resources.

17
18 Mr. Gutierrez stated that a majority of city residents understood the positive impact of adults spending time with kids,
19 but only 26% of adults participated. Local groups that connected adults with children needed to be supported.
20 Superintendent Comeau responded the ASD worked with the United Way which led a number of agencies that
21 promoted adult-youth interactions. Some families in the community were difficult to reach because the models were
22 not applicable. Mr. Gutierrez stated that many teachers were not aware of the mentoring programs.

23
24 Mr. Coffey stated that the complexities and the concerns were great. Everyone was anxious and working hard to get
25 the answers, but there were no simple solutions to these problems. He had talked with an elderly gentleman on a
26 fixed income who had raised four kids and complained that he was still paying for other kids now, with taxes.
27 Resources were needed, but scarce. Increasing property taxes was an example of the complexity of the solutions.

28
29 Chair Claman stated there was State grant money to create a school community center as a part of the redevelopment
30 plan for the city. Superintendent Comeau responded the money would be used for a master plan, but there had not
31 been a formal endorsement of Romig being a community center. Consideration was needed to broaden the
32 comprehensive use of middle and high schools. The process needed to include identifying potential private partners to
33 manage school facilities that were used publicly, like the swimming pools and a community center.

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35 7. COMMENTS There were none.

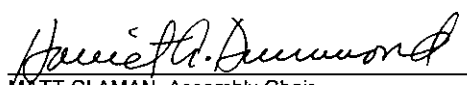
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37 8. SCHEDULING OF UPCOMING JOINT MEETINGS.

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39 8.A. First Quarter – March 20, 2009, 10:00 a.m. at the ASD Education Center.

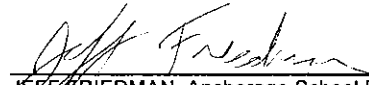
40 8.B. Second Quarter – June 12, 2009, 10:00 A.M. at City Hall.

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42 9. ADJOURNMENT

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44 Chair Claman adjourned the Joint Meeting of November 21, 2008 was adjourned at 1:47 p.m.

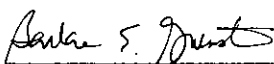
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53 MATT CLAMAN, Assembly Chair

54 HARRIET DRUMMOND, Acting

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63 JEFF FRIEDMAN, Anchorage School Board President

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ATTEST:

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63 BARBARA GRUENSTEIN, Municipal Clerk

64 Date Minutes Approved: March 20, 2009.

65 MC/BG

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