

SPECIAL ASSEMBLY MEETING 2024-22 MINUTES

September 23, 2024 at 12:15 PM

Zoom Webinar Only



- A. **CALL TO ORDER** Meeting no. 2024-22: the Special Meeting of the City and Borough of Juneau Assembly was held via Zoom and called to order by Mayor Beth Weldon at 12:16 p.m.

B. **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Deputy Mayor Hale provided the following land acknowledgment: We would like to acknowledge that the City & Borough of Juneau is on Tlingit land and wish to honor the indigenous people of this land. For more than ten thousand years, Alaska Native people have been and continue to be integral to the well-being of our community. We are grateful to be in this place, a part of this community, and to honor the culture, traditions, and resilience of the Tlingit people. *Gunalchéesh!*

C. **ROLL CALL**

Assemblymembers present: Wade Bryson, Greg Smith, Paul Kelly, Ella Adkison, 'Wáahlaal Gídaag, Christine Woll, Deputy Mayor Michelle Hale, Mayor Beth Weldon

Assemblymembers absent: Alicia Hughes-Skandijs

Staff present: City Manager Katie Koester, City Attorney Emily Wright, Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen, Minutes Clerk/Meeting Tech Kevin Allen, Budget Manager Adrien Wendel

D. **SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS**

1. **Flood Mitigation Update**

Mayor Weldon reported that her and City Manager Koester went to Washington D.C. They were joined by Jackie Pata, First Vice President of Tlingit & Haida Central Council (THCC), as well as THCC Public Safety Officer Sarah Grubitz, and had productive meetings with the Alaska Congressional Delegation and representatives from a number of federal agencies in Washington D.C.

Manager Koester said that Governor Dunleavy has submitted a disaster declaration request to the president, and that the Alaska delegation have also sent a joint letter requesting a disaster declaration. She explained that a disaster declaration would free up additional individual assistance for homeowners, double the amount of public assistance, and make CBJ eligible for FEMA funding. She added that the Governor and Tlingit & Haida Central Council President Richard Peterson submitted a request for technical assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's (USACE) Flood Fighting Team. This flood fighting team is in Juneau and met with the CBJ Engineering Department, State of Alaska Department of Transportation/Public Facilities (AK DOT/PF), and the National Weather Service (NWS) to talk through short and mid-term flood fighting options. She said that the ordinance before the Assembly would provide a feasibility study for a long-term fix while work was done on implementing a plan for the near-term fix. She stated that, to start the long-term study project, the city will need some congressionally directed spending, so in addition to the \$3 million being appropriated today, the city needs a minimum of \$500,000 in funding from a federal piece of legislation. She said the delegation met with Senators Sullivan and Murkowski, as well as Congresswoman Peltola, and they were working on funding and finding long-term solutions. She stressed the importance of the united front with the tribe and the city representatives joint together during the trip.

Ms. Hale asked at what point a team of local experts will be made, and if the city needed more resources. Manager Koester asked those in the public that have local expertise to reach out using the flood fighting response email, or directly to her or Deputy Manager Barr. She said the city has been working with the National Weather Service, the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS), and AK DOT/PF. She explained that there are two teams: one focused on flood fighting and another focused on long term solutions. She said there will

be additional resources needed, but there will be a better understanding after the USACE's site visit in Juneau. Ms. Hale stated her support.

Mr. Smith asked Manager Koester what assistance or information USACE can provide for homeowners. Mayor Weldon noted that the question ties in with the manager's flood fighting report. Manager Koester reported that the USACE has HESCO barriers stockpiled in Illinois that they can get to Juneau in three weeks, all she needs to do is write a letter and the barriers will be put on a barge. She said the USACE would also provide advisement on placement of the barriers, but the city would have to work on the actual placement, so a risk assessment is being done. She stated that getting legal access to people's property along the river will be another barrier. She stressed the potential cost, risk, and difficulty of this, but said the city is talking through those challenges with engineers, AK DOT/PF, National Weather Service, and Hydrologists. She anticipates she will need the Assembly to make some decisions in the short-term and on how much they lean in on preparing for a fall event. She said she doesn't have an answer to Mr. Smith's question about advice to homeowners as those will be part of conversations they have around individual homeowner vs. community-wide response.

Mayor Weldon asked if a public meeting is possible next week. Manager Koester asked for more days with the USACE before she could commit to a public meeting.

Ms. Hale said she appreciates the consideration of a public meeting. She asked if there has been any discussion about getting the barriers to Juneau via a cargo flight instead of via barge. Manager Koester answered no and advised that, if she were to pull the trigger tomorrow to get the barriers within three weeks, that would give the city time.

Mr. Kelly asked if the barriers would be able to withstand river currents. Manager Koester responded that the only material the city could get in time are these stockpiled USACE barriers, so there isn't much choice on the type of barrier to use.

Mayor Weldon noted that they informed the Army Corps in D.C. that the situation is unique; there is current in the water, it was not a passive flood.

Mr. Smith stressed that flood protection information for homeowners, whatever basic, would be very helpful so they know how to prepare.

E. MANAGER'S REQUEST FOR AGENDA CHANGES – None.

F. INSTRUCTIONS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The public may participate via Zoom webinar only. Testimony time was limited by the Mayor based on the number of participants. ***Members of the public wishing to provide oral testimony were required to notify the Municipal Clerk by 10:00am the day of the meeting by calling 907-586-5278 and indicating the topic(s) upon which they wish to testify.*** Members of the public were encouraged to send their comments in advance of the meeting to BoroughAssembly@juneau.gov.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS *(Limited to no more than 20 minutes, with each speaker limited to a length of time set by the Mayor not to exceed three minutes.)*

Roman Motyka, a downtown resident, retired UAS professor and Glacier scientist, said he had three questions to ask: **1)** Will the city be forming a technical advisory committee to review RFP proposals, monitor hydrologic modelling work, and work with the Corps; **2)** Does CBJ staff recognize that there could be local expertise and have they made effort to reach out and solicit advice; and lastly, **3)** Could it be ensured that the studies around Suicide Basin and Mendenhall Glacier are adequately funded, or could be expanded. He advised that establishing barriers will change things along the river and that climate change is the driver of the current situation.

G. PUBLIC HEARING ON ORDINANCES

2. Ordinance 2024-01(b)(M): An Ordinance Appropriating \$3,000,000 to the Manager as Local Matching Funds for a United States Army Corps of Engineers Glacier Outburst Flooding General Investigation Study; Funding Provided by General Funds.

This ordinance would appropriate \$3,000,000 as local matching funds for a United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) glacier outburst flooding investigation study. In August 2024, the Mendenhall Vally was flooded by a glacier outburst flood caused by Suicide Basin. The 2024 flood levels exceeded previous flooding events, damaging over 300 residences in the area. This funding would contribute toward a study with the USACE to determine flood mitigation solutions when the Suicide Basin ice dam releases water in the future.

The Committee of the Whole reviewed this request at the September 9, 2024, meeting. The Systemic Racism Review Committee reviewed this ordinance at its September 17, 2024, meeting.

The Assembly Finance Committee reviewed this ordinance at its September 18th, 2024, meeting. Staff are working on two additional pieces of legislation to reimburse the General Fund for this appropriation, which will include \$2,000,000 from the Docks and Harbors Fisheries Land Terminal Purchase CIP and \$1,000,000 from the Restricted Budget Reserve.

The City Manager recommends the Assembly hold public testimony and adopt this ordinance.

Public Comment

Clinton Singletary, a valley resident, shared that he was impacted by the flood. He stated that he supports the two ordinances, but was concerned about lack of action by the Assembly and staff after last year's flood. He said the 2023 November Committee of the Whole meeting was the last time the Assembly addressed that issue. He spoke to the items that were discussed, but didn't see any information from that time to June 2024, and he could not find any other Assembly meetings between that time where flood related items were discussed. He said he feels the ball was dropped after last year's flood, and that, had the Assembly and staff continued the work that was started last year, citizens could've been more prepared and informed. Ms. Hale asked if he reviewed minutes for the Public Works and Facilities Committee meetings. Mr. Singletary said yes but he could not find flood related items during that timeframe.

Assembly Action

MOTION by Mr. Bryson to adopt Ordinance 2024-01(b)(M) and asked for unanimous consent. *Hearing no objection, the motion was adopted by unanimous consent.*

3. Ordinance 2024-01(b)(N) An Ordinance Appropriating \$100,000 to the Manager for Expanded Inundation Maps and Hydrological Modeling of the Mendenhall River; Funding Provided by General Funds.

This ordinance would appropriate \$100,000 of general funds for expanded inundation maps and hydrological modeling of the Mendenhall River. In August 2024, the Mendenhall Vally was flooded by a glacier outburst flood caused by Suicide Basin. The 2024 flood levels exceeded previous flooding events, damaging over 300 residences in the area. This funding would contribute toward detailed mapping and hydrological modeling of the Mendenhall River to determine potential flood impacts in the future, with data collected to be used for mitigation solutions.

The Committee of the Whole reviewed this request at the September 9, 2024 meeting. The Systemic Racism Review Committee reviewed this ordinance at its September 17, 2024 meeting. The Assembly Finance Committee reviewed this ordinance at its September 18, 2024 meeting.

The City Manager recommends the Assembly hold public testimony and adopt this ordinance.

Public Comment

None.

Assembly Action

MOTION by Ms. Woll to adopt Ordinance 2024-01(b)(N) and asked for unanimous consent.

Mr. Smith objected for the purpose of a question. He asked if there were any experts available outside of CBJ staff who were reviewing the RFP for this work. Manager Koester answered yes, and that they have leaned on AK DOT/PF for some of that work. She explained that the first piece of this would need to be sole-source due to need to get data very quickly and will include local experts from AK DOT/PF and USACE.; Any model or studies will need to be made by both of those groups, and the second step will be done as a separate RFP. Mr. Smith said he does not know how often CBJ will need to be doing the inundation and hydrological work. He asked if this was an expense that CBJ will continue to bear or if the city can expect support from other agencies. Manager Koester responded that the city would be looking to the USACE silver jacket funding to do the inundation map work. Traditionally, this work would involve looking for federal funding partners, but this is a one off given the unique circumstances. Mr. Smith removed his objection.

Mr. Kelly asked if there was any possibility of getting reimbursed from the federal government for this year's funds. Manager Koester answered not to her knowledge.

Hearing no further objection, the motion passed by unanimous consent.

Mayor Weldon commented that this flood was very different than last year's flood, as last year was a lot of erosion rather than flooding and the 2023 flood had not rose to the level of national disaster declaration. She said things are different now because the flood has happened again, more people are paying attention to it, and this year's flood impacted 300 houses.

Manager Koester added that last year, the city was looking at a bank stabilization project and this year they were looking at it very differently.

H. STAFF REPORTS

I. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Assembly, the meeting was adjourned at 1:01 p.m.

Signed: _____

Elizabeth J. McEwen
Municipal Clerk

Signed: _____

Beth A. Weldon
Mayor