

SPECIAL ASSEMBLY MEETING 2025-02 WITH JUNEAU LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION MINUTES

January 23, 2025, at 7:00 AM



Assembly Chambers/Zoom Webinar

Meeting No. 2025-02: the Special Meeting of the City and Borough of Juneau Assembly was held in the Assembly Chambers and called to order by Mayor Beth Weldon at 7:05 a.m.

A. CALL TO ORDER

B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs led the meeting with 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

Each of the Assemblymembers introduced themselves and the length of time they have served on the Assembly.

Assemblymembers present: Greg Smith (via Zoom), Christine Woll, Paul Kelly (via Zoom), Ella Adkison, Alicia Hughes-Skandijs, Neil Steininger, Maureen Hall, and Mayor Beth Weldon

Assemblymembers absent: Wade Bryson.

CBJ Staff present: City Manager Katie Koester, City Attorney Emily Wright, Deputy City Manager Robert Barr, Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen, Lands Manager Dan Bleidorn, Finance Director Angie Flick, Engineering/Public Works Director Denise Koch, Port Director Carl Uchtyl, Community Development Director Jill Lawhorne, Visitor Industry Director Alexandra Pierce, Police Chief Derek Bos, Library Director Catherine Melville, Grant Manager Ashley Heimburger, Meeting Tech/Minutes Clerk Kevin Allen

1. Introduction of Special Guests

Special Guests Senator Jesse Kiehl, Representative Sara Hannan, and Representative Andi Story introduced themselves and their staff.

Washington DC Lobbyist Katie Kachel and Alaska Lobbyist Kevin Jardell were also present and introduced themselves.

Also present were staff from the Congressional Delegation offices: Senator Dan Sullivan staff member Maria Uchtyl, and Senator Lisa Murkowski staff member Kara Hollatz.

D. AGENDA TOPICS

2. Updates from Senator Jesse Kiehl and Representatives Andi Story and Sara Hannan (*see below*)

3. Update from CBJ State Lobbyist Kevin Jardell (*see below*)

4. Update from CBJ DC Lobbyist Katie Kachel (*see below*)

Senator Jesse Kiehl serves on the following State Senate committees: Senate Judiciary Committee (Vice-Chair), Senate Finance Committee, Senate Education Committee, Senate Ombudsman Selection Committee, and Senate Transportation Committee.

Senator Kiehl spoke primarily about the financial picture of the upcoming legislative session, they have a broad bi-partisan coalition in the Senate, just over two thirds of the body. The Senate is likely to operate by design in a very non-partisan way that will let them put ideas and solutions first. He said the sustaining draw from the earnings of the permanent fund will be the largest revenue source and the most stable source. Oil is the secondary revenue source and that is not quite as stable.

Representative Sara Hannan serves on the following House of Representatives committees: Legislative Council, House Select Committee on Legislative Ethics, House Finance Committee (and multiple subcommittees).

Representative Hannan spoke to the financial picture from the House of Representatives side. She also provided information regarding the committees that she serves on. She spoke to the success of the Assembly building being turned into housing and how many legislative staff are now living in the Assembly building. She also passed along the praises from fellow legislators about the welcome reception and gift bags – it was the best one ever.

Representative Story serves on the following House of Representatives committees: House Education (Co-Chair), House State Affairs (Vice-Chair), House Tribal Affairs, and a number of Finance subcommittees.

She shared her appreciation for the annual community welcome reception. She also explained that the House Education Committee would be looking at the education funding bill next week. Representative Story said the State Affairs Committee would be meeting later that day to take up election bills. Rep. Story said they had a bi-partisan coalition in the House, and they were working beyond parties to help Alaska as a whole. She also spoke to the focus of the coalition on energy as well as the PFD and budget reserve. She stressed that it is important that they hear from all their communities and they will be protecting the budget moving forward. Their doors are open, and they would like to hear more from the public and communities.

Mayor Weldon welcomed Kara Hollatz and Maria Uchytel and asked if they wanted to speak to any of the federal issues their offices are currently working on. Ms. Uchytel said that they did not have any details but that they were there to help for anyone who may need assistance in navigating the new administration.

Mayor Weldon noted that the Assembly sent letters to each of the federal delegation to see if there was anything that could be done to help speed up the process for the GLOF mitigation.

The legislative delegation and Assembly proceeded to discuss a variety of topics including the following:

- Housing, especially with respect to energy efficient retrofit programs, as well as teacher and public health housing projects through AHFC.
- Fishing industry concerns.
- The School Bond reimbursement program and the likelihood (or not) of getting state funding when the moratorium ends in July.

CBJ Lobbyist Kevin Jardell then provided his take on the hot topics and issues that he was tracking across both legislative bodies. He agreed with the previous speakers in noting that Juneau has had a long history of our delegation working together, regardless of what side of the aisle they occupy, which puts us in a strong position.

In addition to those topics noted above, he said he was also closely tracking the following topics:

- Education funding, including the funding formula, as well as how the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) views local governments funding for things “outside the cap.”
- Alaska Marine Highway system
- The Capital Budget

Mr. Jardell noted there is a piece of legislation he is tracking related to flood insurance at the state level that was introduced by Senator Stedman.

In answer to Mr. Smith asking if there was anything they were hearing that could be done to be a better Capital City for the legislators and others coming to Juneau during the legislative session, Mr. Jardell responded that the building of the legislative housing in the Assembly Building was a huge benefit. The legislative housing that is now available is providing approximately two-thirds of the housing needs for the legislators. He said that the Juneau Community Foundation (JCF) has been looking at buildings around the Capitol Complex. He noted the complaints that have come in have been about concerns related to the small number and lack of variety of restaurants available and open downtown. The other issues the AK Committee has been trying to address are the

transportation challenges related to moving people from the airport to the hotels. He said some people have had to wait 2 hours to get to their hotels. He then spoke to the JEDC survey and the recent issues it identified.

Rep. Hannan said one of the things they have done in recent year are 'field trips' to local places such as DIPAC, Marine Exchange, Mining Museum, etc... Mayor Weldon said she and Mr. Jardell will start their annual visit to the Capitol Building to welcome all the legislators and office staff.

Sen. Kiehl noted something Juneau can do to help make downtown more welcoming is that wherever there are open concrete sidewalks downtown, to be sure to put an awning over it when the opportunities present themselves. He suggested adding that provision to the Comprehensive Plan so that over the decades, Juneau could really benefit from having covered walking areas.

Washington D.C. Lobbyist Katie Kachel then provided an update about what has been happening in Washington DC. She reported that Juneau City management, as well as Mr. Jardell and the Governor's office have been instrumental in getting things acted upon quickly with response to the flood emergency and getting help from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). She said getting congressional directive priority language for the USACE to start the study was accomplished due in large part due to the Alaskan congressional delegation getting that language into the federal disaster supplemental bill. She said it wasn't easy, and she congratulated the delegation for accomplishing that.

Ms. Kachel said in her meetings with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as well as the US Forest Service and that their headquarters have really nudged them and put this on their radar. This will help keep it top of mind when that funding comes down. She said the language in the bill was not allowed to mention Juneau, AK specifically, but it was able to say Glacial Lake Outburst Flooding (GLOF) . She said her team will be working to make sure the USACE knows the congressional intent was to make sure the language will be included in the work plan, which was due to be enacted within 90 days of enactment of the bill, on approximately February 18. She said they will be meeting with the USACE Assistant Secretary of the Army Civil Works who will need to sign off on all the projects that will be included in the December supplemental funding bill. She said they will need to follow up with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) which does the ultimate sign off of the USACE projects. Additionally, she will be following other items that were also in that funding budget which included Community Development Block Grant Disaster Relief. She said HUD knows that some of that funding was intended to be for Juneau since the congressional delegation worked specifically to include it in the bill. That involves an action plan to make sure the money makes it to Juneau. She then addressed the \$3M match with the USFS, that was promised for this project. Her team will continue to follow up on that with USFS.

Ms. Kachel said they will be following up and looking at the federally directed spending (earmarks) and how the CBJ list lines up with that. She said they will be looking at what the federal, state, and local funding buckets for those funds are and how they line up, as well as how competitive they are. She said there is currently a firehose happening at the D.C. level with all of the Executive Orders that are being issued, and they are trying to sort them all out. She said they are raising a lot of questions. They are also providing additional insights on where Alaska stands as a state in the energy development spectrum. She noted that the devil is in the details and we are hoping to put our best projects forward. She then spoke to the impact of Executive Orders on grants that have already been awarded, as well as the impact on the Inflation Reduction Act aka Green New Deal. She said with respect to transportation infrastructure and energy, those bills were agreed to on a bi-partisan basis and may be hard to undo if the current administration wants to make changes to them.

Ms. Kachel said they are also expecting Congress to change course on the FY2025 Congressional Directed Spending (CDS) bill and they may see some changes on what will be getting funding. There are a lot of things they will be tracking and there are two more years of funding left with the bi-partisan funding effort. She said while it was a bi-partisan bill from a bi-partisan committee, she did see some potential shift in the bill's priorities.

She then answered questions from Assemblymembers regarding the CDS bill.

Assemblymembers had an opportunity to ask questions of the legislators and lobbyists. They discussed the parking garage at 2nd and Franklin Street and what the potential might be to transfer that property back to CBJ from the State. Mr. Jardell provided information that DOT is planning on rehabilitating that parking lot and if CBJ wanted to transfer that for housing purposes, CBJ would need to be willing to swap it out for alternative parking solutions within that same vicinity.

Mayor Weldon thanked all the attendees for coming to the meeting and for all their work on behalf of the citizens of CBJ.

5. Review of Legislative Capital Priorities

The complete Legislative Priorities binder with project descriptions are included at the end of this packet under Supplemental Materials.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs shared she won't be at the next meeting when they discuss the Legislative Capital Priorities list that was in the packet. She shared her thoughts on the proposed movement of the items on the list as initially suggested. She said her focus would always be on the housing aspects of the list and making sure they are prioritized at the top.

6. Introduction of Ordinance 2025-12 An Ordinance Amending Ordinance Serial No. 2024-42 Regarding the Proposed Refinancings by the Alaska Municipal Bond Bank of Various Revenue Bonds of the City and Borough Authorized Thereunder.

This ordinance is an amendment to Ordinance 2024-42 which authorized the refinancing of three bonds through the Alaska Municipal Bond Bank (AMBB). The amendment is necessary as the AMBB is consolidating principal due dates to the month of December which changes the payment schedule from March to December and alters the years of maturity in CBJ's issuances. This ordinance adjusts the maturity years for AMBB's due date changes.

Ordinance 2024-42 authorized the issuance of up to \$13.5 million in bonds to refund (refinance) the 2014A Port, 2015 Harbor, and 2021 Port bonds. The original bonds were sold through the Alaska Municipal Bond Bank and financed harbor improvements, seawalk construction, and cruise ship berth enhancements. Ordinance 2024-42 was approved on December 16, 2024.

The City Manager recommends this ordinance be introduced and set for public hearing at the next regular Assembly meeting.

Assembly Action

MOTION by Ms. Hughes-Skandijs to introduce Ordinance 2025-12 and set for public hearing at the next regular Assembly meeting and asked for unanimous consent. *Hearing no objection, the motion passed by unanimous consent.*

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

F. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

7. FY2026 Legislative Capital Priorities (January 2025 DRAFT, Un-adopted)

G. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Assembly, the meeting was adjourned at 8:48 a.m.

Signed: _____

Elizabeth J. McEwen,
Municipal Clerk

Signed: _____

Beth Weldon
Mayor