ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MINUTES

August 4, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Assembly Chambers/Zoom Webinar

Assembly Committee of the Whole Worksession - No Public Testimony will be taken.
https://juneau.zoom.us/j/95424544691 or 1-253-215-8782 Webinar ID: 954 2454 4691

A. CALL TO ORDER

Deputy Mayor Smith called the Assembly Committee of the Whole to order at 6:01 pm

B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT - Read by Assembymember Hughes-Skandijs

We would like to acknowledge that the City and 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: Deputy Mayor Greg Smith, Wade Bryson, Alicia Hughes-Skandijs, Paul Kelly, Ella Adkison, Neil Steininger (via Zoom), Maureen Hall, Christine Woll (via Zoom).
Assemblymembers Absent: Mayor Beth Weldon
Staff Present: City Manager Katie Koester, Deputy Manager Robert Barr, City Attorney Emily Wright, Municipal Clerk Breckan Hendricks, Meeting Tech Kevin Allen

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA - Approved by unanimous consent.

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Ms. Hall to approve the 5-12-2025 and 7-14-2025 COW minutes. ***Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved by unanimous consent.***

1. **2025-05-12 Special Assembly Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes - Draft**

2. **2025-07-14 Assembly Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes - Draft**

F. AGENDA TOPICS

1. Consideration of Shelter Safety Zone Options

Mr. Barr explained that Juneau is not the only municipality facing this issue and that cuts at the federal level over the years exacerbated the problem. He recalled that this and previous Assemblies have increased funding over the last decade, but the current challenges have outpaced that support due to reduced federal and state support, demographic shifts in housing and the workforce, and the absence of a coordinated local strategy. He informed members that there have been conversations in the provider community about options for summer shelter/camping, and the city has been part of those conversations, as well as Assemblymember Kelly.

Chair Smith said this conversation came about because people felt unsafe in that area. Mr. Barr confirmed that was correct, adding that the broader provider community approached the City with concerns that their staff and clients in the Teal Street area are unable to effectively operate due to increased illegal activity.

Ms. Adkison sought confirmation that the ordinance only addresses the unhoused population and asked Attorney Wright whether she had any concerns about selective enforcement. Attorney Wright responded that she would have legal concerns about that. She explained that all ordinances and legislation are reviewed by CBJ Law to make sure the City is not responding to a certain group or banning one.

Chair Smith asked Attorney Wright if the Bellingham ordinance has been challenged in court, and if she could see the ordinance being applied neutrally. Attorney Wright said she has not seen anything challenge the Bellingham ordinance, but the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) has been challenging similar ordinances. She explained that the Bellingham ordinance is narrowly tailored as an anti-camping measure for a single block to ensure access to services.

Ms. Woll asked why the shelter safety zone would have any higher legal risk than the disorderly conduct ordinance that was proposed by the Assembly, as it seems to target similar behavior. Attorney Wright said she has the same concerns about the ordinance as it is presented, noting that the discussion has focused on homelessness rather than on neutral application of the ordinance. She advised that it needs to be looked at with a broad perspective and a bigger picture for the City. She asked what behaviors need to be stopped or encouraged so service providers can provide service, versus a population. She said the problem is the same with disorderly conduct.

Mr. Bryson presented a scenario involving a homeless encampment creating trash in a greenbelt near a neighborhood in the Mendenhaven area and the neighborhood called the police He asked how the police would handle such a scenario. Attorney Wright answered that there are citywide trespass ordinances. She said that a person camping in the area of a private, CBJ, or state property and told to leave by the owner or person in charge, or leave and come back, the person would be subject to criminal penalties like citation, arrest, or overnight in jail. Mr. Bryson asked why the City is not offering the same protections to the patrons of the Glory Hall and Teal Street as a neighborhood. Mr. Barr explained that the city does not use the trespass code on homeless people camping on city land until the individual's activities are a detriment to the users of the area. He said the city is not treating any particular street differently. Mr. Bryson asked why that is not being done now, since the individuals are having a negative impact on the patrons. Mr. Barr responded that they are not treating any public land differently, and they are not enforcing the law until the impacts exceed quantitative and qualitative judgments because that is the direction staff has interpreted from the Assembly.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs asked for the differences between "time, manner, and place" and a physical zone, if any. Attorney Wright explained that government action is bound by time, manner, and place, as well as constitutional requirements such as equal protection, while private organizations are not. She said if she was asked to create a shelter zone, she'd come back with a proposal that would be fairly narrow and kept to time, manner, place, and neutrality.

Ms. Hall asked about the radius and what other areas are being impacted similar to Teal Street. Mr. Barr said he cannot recall any, but there were many complaints at the Mil Street campground, and before that, there were many in the Thane area campground. He added that the complaint level is higher on Teal Street right now than anywhere else.

Mr. Bryson asked about Anchorage's restrictions that trespasses people within 200 feet of public trails and water bodies, and 500 feet of playgrounds and schools. He also inquired about feasibility of adopting a similar approach in Juneau. Attorney Wright responded that a comparable ordinance could be implemented, but concerns were raised during public testimony about whether the Anchorage Police Department could effectively enforce it and the burdens involved. She added that the ACLU has sued Anchorage over 2023 and 2025 code provisions related to camp clearings and property removal, though there have been no updates r indications of further legal action.
Mr. Steininger asked about where the individuals from Teal Street would end up shifting to, if there was a strict camping ban. Mr. Barr said that people want to be close to services and transportation, so there might be increased camping on the border of the zone, as well as accessible green belt areas. Mr. Steininger asked whether the individuals would likely relocate closer to residential areas. Mr. Barr agreed that was likely.

Chair Smith asked if individuals camping on City land without violating health or safety conditions would be allowed to remain. Mr. Barr confirmed they likely would not be dispersed.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs asked about progress toward a summer low-barrier shelter. Mr. Barr responded that there has been progress. He added that Mr. Steininger is correct about the residential areas question but pointed out that there are residential areas in the Teal Street area as well. Regarding the summer shelter, he said the group that has been meeting has been looking at potential locations to consider and the problems to address. He noted that cold weather presents challenges for shelter options. He said there are early indications of some land that may be for sale soon on Teal Street, so that may be an option he would bring back is to purchase the land to renovate/build a shelter, but there may be other options as well.

Mr. Kelly said an idea from the group was to not have just one centralized problem area but multiple smaller ones.

Ms. Adkison suggested that staff come back with ideas that the City could do to mitigate the impact of the homeless population, like porta potties or sharps containers.

Ms. Woll asked if there would be appetite to open the cold weather shelter earlier to at least address the issue while the assembly works through this. Mr. Barr responded that it is likely not an option due to staffing and capacity limitations, but if that changes, he would let the Assembly know. He said St. Vincent De Paul is at the limits of their capacity when they operate the shelter for the City. He said he doesn't see them having the capacity to open before October 15.

Ms. Adkison asked if increasing money would assist with the staffing and capacity issues. Mr. Barr explained that his instinct is that, if the Assembly wishes to spend a lot of extra money, then yes, but he can't provide an answer right now of how much that would take.

Mr. Bryson noted that many unhoused individuals avoid shelters in good weather due to restrictions, but camping is not a solution, as it signals giving up on long-term housing. He emphasized the need to separate homelessness policy from the immediate issue of protecting staff and patrons in the area. He added that the Assembly has not given clear direction to address illegal behavior, leaving both the community and the unhoused at risk.

MOTION by Mr. Bryson that staff bring forward a draft protection area ordinance modeled on Bellingham's ordinance, but adapted with Juneau-specific provisions, for discussion at the next Assembly Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting.

OBJECTION by Ms. Adkison. She expressed concerns about the legality of the proposal and requested that alternative options be explored to avoid potential legal challenges for the city.
Ms. Hughes-Skandijs said she would need more detail about boundaries, and that Bellingham's ordinance is specific to certain areas. Mr. Bryson said the area would be Teal Street.

Ms. Hall stated that campers are the most vulnerable and opposed creating a zone that would displace them from the only soup kitchen. She suggested increased presence to help reduce lawlessness and improve safety for all.
Mr. Kelly noted that funds intended for services are instead being spent on security. He added that this approach doesn't guide campers to alternative

locations. While solving homelessness is too complex for one meeting, he suggested providing at least an alternative site could help.

Ms. Woll expressed support for the motion and an interest in facilitating movement in and out of Teal Street but was uncertain about supporting the ordinance itself.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs asked if the ordinance would be legal under the Grants Pass precedent. Attorney Wright said the Bellingham model, which bans sitting or lying on sidewalks, would be legal, but the Anchorage model would not. She explained the key issue is whether sleeping in public is a protected right. Ms. Hughes-Skandijs maintained her objection to Mr. Bryson's motion, agreeing that the Assembly must clarify the problem it aims to solve, not just homelessness. She noted staff advised the Assembly could enforce other legal measures post-Grants Pass, but the Assembly chose not to. She also linked the current situation to the closure of the summer campground and said she cannot support the ordinance.

Mr. Steininger said pushing vulnerable groups further into the margins won't improve safety. He suggested staff focus on addressing the issue rather than shifting it. While supporting the intent, he cannot back the safety zone concept.

Mr. Bryson highlighted the lack of security on Teal Street and urged the Assembly to address ongoing criminal behavior. He supported the Bellingham model because it avoids legitimizing camping, which he believes ultimately harms the homeless.

Chair Smith stated he would support the motion as a starting point for Assembly discussion and potential review by the ACLU. He emphasized the need to support service providers in the area.

Roll Call Vote on Motion
Yeas: Bryson, Hall, Woll, Chair Smith
Nays: Adkison, Kelly, Steininger, Hughes-Skandijs
Motion failed: 4 Yeas and –4 Nays.

Chair Smith gave notice of intent to move for reconsideration of the motion regarding a protection area ordinance. An objection was raised, but the Chair ruled it out of order, as notice of reconsideration is not debatable or subject to objection under Robert's Rules of Order.

MOTION by Ms. Hughes-Skandijs to keep the shelter safety zone discussion within the Assembly Committee of the Whole.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs withdrew her motion, explaining that her intent was to express support for continuing the discussion in Committee and to ensure the topic had a place for further consideration. She acknowledged the motion may be unnecessary given the recent vote and potential reconsideration.

Ms. Hall asked whether the shelter exclusion zone would be discussed at the next Committee of the Whole meeting. Attorney Wright clarified that since the exclusion zone motion was voted down, it cannot be discussed again without a successful motion to reconsider. However, new motions on different topics related to the shelter could be introduced for the next meeting.

MOTION by Ms. Hall to direct staff to bring back other solutions to increase the safety around the shelter.

Ms. Woll inquired if this is the same motion as she had made previously, noting that the memo in the packet addresses that request.

Mr. Barr suggested that more specific guidance on which solutions to investigate would be helpful.

Ms. Hall withdrew her motion.

Mr. Kelly expressed his view that the core issue relates to enforcement. He noted that while police have increased their presence in the area, a dedicated security presence might serve as more of a deterrent. He said he's curious what the body's appetite would be to have dedicated private security in that area.

Mr. Barr explained that JPD is providing maximum patrols possible given current staffing, but cannot maintain a constant on-site presence. This could change with more officers in the future, but not in the short term. He noted private security would depend on local providers to involve JPD for reports and charges, and that it would be costly.

Chair Smith asked if Mr. Barr could follow up. Mr. Barr said, if the Assembly desires, he could consult providers and bring estimates or pursue formal contractor proposals. He also suggested a Teal Street non-profit could manage a grant to fund the service.

Ms. Hall emphasized that safety solutions should not displace campers and that any security firm hired must be integrated to support the population while ensuring safety.

Mr. Bryson said a criminal element has taken root, harming businesses and exploiting Glory Hall patrons. He noted that several providers can assist sober individuals quickly, but many campers refuse services. He emphasized the challenge of serving those involved in criminal activity who are shielded by camping near the shelter and said any city protection for Teal Street would positively impact the homeless community.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs said most members agree safety is needed and suggested limited staff time with just a few follow-up calls. Chair Smith agreed and invited input on what staff should report back. Ms. Hughes-Skandijs expressed interest in updates on a potential land purchase and alternative sites for a summer campground or low-barrier shelter.

Mr. Bryson noted the existence of designated camping grounds, including Mill Street Campground, and welcomed any related information.

Ms. Hall explained that the two public Forest Service campgrounds have 14-day limits and require credit card and internet access for reservations. She emphasized that addiction and mental illness are not crimes, and some may resort to illegal behavior to survive.

(The Assembly took an at-ease from 7:22 pm to 7:32 pm, after which the meeting resumed)

2. Ordinance 2025-13(b) - Ranked Choice Voting (RCV)

Chair Smith explained that ordinance has been introduced and received public testimony. After amendments at the full Assembly, it was referred back to the Committee of the Whole (COW). He asked for confirmation that a motion from the committee is required to place it back on a regular Assembly meeting agenda. Attorney Wright confirmed this, noting the ordinance was removed from the August 18 meeting and will need a motion with a specific date to return for public hearing.

Ms. Adkison reminded members why she introduced the ordinance, stating the community supports it because ranked choice voting is well-suited for elections with many candidates competing for a single seat. She explained that the current first-past-the-post system can split votes among similar candidates or pressure them to drop out. She said she introduced this because rank choice voting supports consensus building. She explained that today's amendments deal with block voting and to keep that as it is for school board elections and cases of an Assembly member's early resignation. She expressed hope to have the ordinance placed on the August 18 agenda for public hearing.

Mr. Bryson asked why the measure wasn't pursued as a ballot initiative, suggesting the Assembly could be seen as imposing it without a public vote. Ms. Adkison replied that Juneau had supported ranked choice voting at the state level both when adopted and during repeal efforts. She opposes advisory votes, saying the Assembly should make these decisions directly. Noting the legislature declined to enact ranked choice voting, requiring citizen initiatives, she stressed the Assembly's duty to address such issues and rejected advisory votes as avoiding that responsibility.

MOTION by Ms. Adkison to place Ordinance 2025-13(b) on the August 18 Regular Assembly meeting agenda for public hearing. She objected to her own motion for the purpose of offering an amendment.

AMENTMENT #1 by Ms. Adkison to adopt Amendment #1, co-sponsored by Mr. Steininger. She explained the amendment would retain block voting for multi-seat races, such as School Board elections and Assembly vacancies, while applying ranked choice voting only to single-seat races, aligning with voting methods already familiar to the community.

OBJECTION by Ms. Hall to the ordinance, citing a preference for voter input via ballot and concern about timing and transparency. However, she clarified that her objection did not apply to the proposed amendment.

OBJECTION by Mr. Kelly to the amendment, expressing concern that it removed ranked choice voting (RCV) from multi-seat races, one of his main reasons for supporting the ordinance. He emphasized the need for election winners to have a clear mandate from voters and opposed first-past-the-post voting.

Mr. Bryson asked for clarification on how RCV would apply in multi-seat races. Attorney Wright and Ms. Adkison explained that no changes were proposed for multi-seat or school board races, RCV would apply only to single-seat races.

Mr. Steininger spoke in support of the amendment he co-sponsored, noting the complexity of multi-seat RCV systems like cascade voting and the importance of voter understanding. He felt block voting, while imperfect, is easier to explain and implement.

Ms. Woll asked Mr. Kelly about his proposed amendment, which would create only single-seat races to allow uniform RCV use. Mr. Kelly confirmed this, noting it could reduce competition in races. Ms. Adkison responded that requiring candidates to designate specific seats on the school board could create administrative hurdles and potentially result in uncontested seats. She preferred maintaining block voting to avoid those issues.

Mr. Kelly acknowledged the concern and suggested future amendments could reduce signature requirements to ease the candidate process, reiterating his focus on voter choice and representation.

Roll Call Vote on Amendment #1
Yeas: Adkison, Hall, Steininger, Woll, Hughes-Skandijs, Bryson, Smith
Nays: Kelly
Motion passed: 7 Yeas and – 1 Nay.

(Chair Smith passed the gavel to Mr. Bryson)

AMENDMENT #2 by Deputy Mayor Smith to amend the scheduling of Ordinance 2025-13(b) proposing it be set for public hearing at the August 18 Regular Assembly meeting, and for action at the next Regular Assembly meeting. He explained this would avoid voter confusion close to the upcoming election and allow the public to focus on current ballot measures.

OBJECTION by Ms. Adkison, expressing concern that momentum and public engagement could be lost if action is postponed too long. She emphasized the importance of continued public participation without an extended pause.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs supported the amendment, noting that while she supports ranked choice voting, the timing felt rushed. She valued the opportunity for more public input without resorting to an advisory vote, which she said should be used sparingly.

Mr. Bryson echoed support for public input and explained his openness to an advisory vote stemmed from the unique nature of asking voters to weigh in on how they vote in the future.

Roll Call Vote on Amendment #2
Yeas: Smith, Kelly, Hall, Woll, Hughes-Skandijs, Bryson
Nays: Adkison, Steininger
Motion passed: 6 Yeas and – 2 Nays.

(Mr. Bryson passed the gavel back to Deputy Mayor Smith)

Roll Call Vote on Main Motion
Yeas: Adkison, Bryson, Kelly, Steininger, Smith
Nays: Woll, Hall, Hughes-Skandijs,
Motion passed: 5 Yeas and – 2 Nays.

3. Burns Building/City Hall Move

Manager Koester provided an update on the ongoing negotiations with the Alaska Permanent Fund Corporation (APFC) and its real estate holding company regarding the City and Borough of Juneau's potential purchase of two floors in the Burns Building. Although a memo was not included in the meeting packet due to the timing of negotiations, she shared that the discussions had progressed meaningfully, and she expects to bring an ordinance to the Assembly soon.

Manager Koester shared that the building's appraised value is $9.3 million, and CBJ would pay that full amount. However, under the terms being discussed, $2.7 million of that purchase price would be set aside in a sinking fund controlled by the future condo association. This fund would be used for major capital improvements. APFC had expressed strong concerns about entering into a long-term partnership with a public entity that, due to political or budgetary constraints, might delay or avoid investing in necessary capital maintenance. The sinking fund was included in their counteroffer as a way to ensure that future upkeep would be reliably funded. Koester acknowledged the validity of these concerns, noting that political bodies can deprioritize capital investments during lean financial periods.

The proposed condo association would be governed jointly by CBJ and APFC with 50/50 control, ensuring equal say in shared facility decisions and providing a formal dispute-resolution process. Annual condo dues were estimated at $650,000, covering both operations and long-term maintenance needs. These dues have been consistent throughout the negotiations and financial modeling, and Koester emphasized they are structured similarly to how private entities plan for depreciation and capital costs.

Manager Koester also discussed current space constraints and office inefficiencies. Since vacating the Municipal Way building, staff have been dispersed across multiple facilities including the Fish House in Auke Bay and the old Juneau School District (JSD) dairy building. Marine View, which houses critical operations, continues to present serious health and safety concerns, including multiple leaks and water shutoffs. CBJ recently extended the Marine View lease through July 31, 2026, at an increased cost of $10,000 per month. Koester stressed the financial strain of short-term lease extensions and the urgency of securing a long-term solution.

Manager Koester clarified that while CBJ would contribute $2.7 million into the shared capital fund, APFC would not be required to contribute a matching amount up front. She explained that APFC has greater confidence in its own ability to fund future maintenance and less confidence in CBJ's ability to do so, thus the structure of the deal. Mr. Steininger expressed concern about the implied imbalance in trust and mutual responsibility, noting discomfort with entering a partnership where CBJ is asked to pre-fund its obligations, but APFC is not.

Manager Koester also confirmed that renovations to adapt the space for city needs would be a separate CBJ appropriation. A prior estimate of $5.2 million had been developed for full renovations, while a scaled-back option for essential updates would cost less. Some unused funds remain in the City Hall account and could be redirected for this purpose. Ms. Hughes-Skandijs requested that written terms be brought to a Committee of the Whole before the ordinance is formally introduced.

Mr. Bryson praised the terms as a smart deal, noting that CBJ would be effectively paying the full purchase price while securing future capital investment in the facility.

Manager Koester suggested that the ordinance could be introduced at the September 22 Regular Assembly meeting and discussed further at the September 29 Committee of the Whole. She reiterated her desire to move swiftly given escalating costs and deteriorating lease conditions.

Chair Smith reiterated that the Assembly had previously authorized negotiations and would have the opportunity to review the ordinance once introduced.

Manager Koester confirmed she plans to introduce an ordinance outlining the essential terms and conditions and will recommend it be referred to the September COW meeting for detailed review and discussion.

G. Executive Session

1. Executive Session - Updates on Labor Negotiations

MOTION by Mr. Kelly to move into Executive Session to discuss collective bargaining negotiations, the immediate knowledge of which would adversely affect the finances of the municipality, and asked for unanimous consent. ***Hearing no objection, the motion was adopted by unanimous consent.***

Ms. Woll disclosed that, should any discussion involving the IAF union occur, she would recuse herself and step out.

(The Executive Session began at 8:51 p.m. and concluded at 9:30 p.m.)

The City Manager recommends the Assembly recess into executive session to discuss an update to collective bargaining negotiations, the immediate knowledge of which would adversely affect the finances of the municipality.

Suggested Motion: *I move that the Assembly enter into Executive Session to discuss collective bargaining negotiations, the immediate knowledge of which would adversely affect the finances of the municipality and ask for unanimous consent.*

H. STAFF REPORTS

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs requested a public update regarding the July 30 incident involving a JPD officer. Manager Koester confirmed the officer is on administrative leave and that both internal and external investigations are underway. The internal review will assess whether the use of force complied with department policy. Staff also plan to provide future updates to the Assembly on investigation outcomes and related policy issues, including hiring and vetting practices. Manager Koester noted ongoing communication with Tlingit & Haida and Sealaska leadership, and confirmed the department intends to release body camera footage within 30 days per CBJ ordinance. Chair Smith thanked the manager and emphasized the Assembly's commitment to public safety and transparency.

I. NEXT MEETING DATE - September 8, 2025, at 6PM

J. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

1. 2025-07-14 Assembly Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes - Draft

K. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Assembly, the meeting adjourned at 9:30p.m.