

ASSEMBLY LANDS HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MINUTES

September 8, 2025 at 5:00 PM

Assembly Chambers/Zoom Webinar



<https://juneau.zoom.us/j/94215342992> or 1-253-215-8782 Webinar ID: 942 1534 2992

A. CALL TO ORDER

B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

Members Present: Chair Wade Bryson, Paul Kelly, Ella Adkison, Neil Steininger

Other Assembly Members Present: Mayor Weldon

Liaisons Present: Paulette Schirmer, PRAC liaison

Liaisons Absent: Lacey Derr, Planning Commission liaison; Jim Becker, Docks & Harbors Board liaison

Staff Present: John King, Deputy Lands Manager; Breckan Hendricks, Municipal Clerk; Jill Lawhorne, CDD Director; Scott Ciambor, Planning Manager; Joseph Meyers, Housing & Land Use Specialist

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA – approved as presented

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. August 4, 2025 Draft LHED Minutes – approved as presented

F. AGENDA TOPICS

1. Community Development Block Grant Recommendation

Mr. Ciambor discussed this topic. Chair Bryson asked if we have to choose at this committee to sponsor either the Southeast Childhood Collective application block grant, or the St. Vincent's block grant and then forward that to the assembly. Mr. Ciambor replied that was correct and noted that the recommended motion for the committee in the packet was to forward a resolution naming St. Vincent de Paul as the co-applicant for the FY26 Community Development Block Grant. Based on the red folder item, the recommended motion would be to switch that to the Southeast Childhood Collective, which is formerly AEYC, as this year's partner for the CDBG grant program.

Mayor Weldon said that she wasn't at the meeting that put the Sobering Center off to the side and not put it forward, so it seems silly not to put something for this Community Block Grant, but my question would be, I think all of us support Southeast Childhood Collective building and childcare, but I don't know that we all support the design, so my question would be, if they did get this grant, is there room for modification or does it mean that they have to do this project. We have not asked the group if we support the project, so I'm just seeing if there's room for modification, if at some point they come to us for money, and we'd say you need to make your project smaller. Mr. Ciambor repeated the question that if Southeast Childhood Collective is recommended as the applicant for this year's CDBG grant, and then in the next couple months if Southeast Childhood Collective staff finish the application proposal for the grant funding, would there be design changes after that grant has been submitted, is that the correct question? Mayor Weldon replied that the simplest question is if they received the grant, can modifications be made to the design and still keep the grant? Mr. Ciambor replied that federal HUD grants are pretty stringent and strict, so basically when an application is submitted for the grant funding that typically is going to be relatively close to the end project. Once the award is made, usually in February-March, then the state has to come in and put in together a

negotiation award grant contract. There can be some modifications at that point, but typically once the applicant signs with the state, the federal government, those tend to be what their project's going to be.

Mayor Weldon followed up to say that it seems like they're applying for, at least what's in our packets, Phase 2, do they have all their funding for Phase 1? And if not, why aren't they going for Phase 1 funding instead of Phase 2? Mr. Ciambor replied that it was his understanding that this is for Phase 1, as noted in the application in the packet. Mayor Weldon said she was looking at the designs and what they circled it look like it says Phase 2, so maybe the design has nothing to do with it. Mr. Ciambor replied that his recollection of the application is that they included as much as information as they had, and they did talk narratively about all phases, but again, the request was for Phase 1 design. Mayor Weldon added that she would suggest that we put a different design in the packet when we apply because it definitely shows Phase 2 is circled, not Phase 1.

Mr. Kelly had a follow up to Madam Mayor's first question, she was interested in knowing if it could be changed after the application is made, but if Madam Mayor had specific changes that she wanted to pursue with SCC, how long would she have to pursue them before the application is submitted? Mr. Ciambor replied that the timeline for this project is if the assembly passes a resolution to work with an applicant, staff will then begin a process of putting together the final application that's typically due the first week of December. There are minor details changes to meet requirements and additional information that's required for the grants that we help them put together that is obviously not in this packet. Probably until end of November for final changes for the applicant's submittal that they would want to turn in.

Ms. Adkison said that there's obviously quite a bit less of block development grant funds than their total Phase 1 cost, do we know where they are planning to get the rest of the roughly \$11 million? Mr. Ciambor replied that basically, the answer is we don't have all the details, just their submittal in terms for how they would apply for the Community Development Block Grant, as part of Phase 1. I think it's been pretty clear in there that Phase 2 and 3 are to be determined.

Ms. Adkison moved to forward a resolution naming Southeast Alaska Childhood Collective as the co-applicant for the FY26 Community Development Block Grant for their Childhood Family Center Phase 1 project to the Assembly for the FY26 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for consideration at the September 15, 2025, meeting. Motion approved unanimously.

G. AGENDA TOPICS

1. National Flood Insurance Program (Verbal Update)

Ms. Lawhorne gave an update on this topic and provided a high-level recap of the issues that CDD runs into when it comes to floodplain development permitting along the Mendenhall River. We have floodplains and flood zones throughout the whole community, and as we move forward, we're hoping to gain some sort of special exemption for now, for lack of a better term. If we're going to be successful in reaching an agreement with FEMA and other agencies, we're going to have to be reasonable and acknowledge that this special permit is probably only for the GLOF-impacted flooded areas, and not relevant to the other, normal floodplain development areas that we have throughout the borough, Tee Harbor, for instance. When it comes to floodplain development permitting, I want to take a step back, because for once, the zoning and the land use doesn't start at Juneau level. It really starts at the federal level, and it's pushed down throughout all the communities across the country that opt into the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The NFIP, is a federally backed insurance, so that properties located in floodplain development areas, you opt into these federally developed regulations that each community adopts. By opting in, you're saying, okay, we agree to these terms and in return if we have an event then the insurance will be paid out on the claims. That all works great for the most part and it's manageable in normal times, and it works fine. The problem with the NFIP is that it maps the 100-year flood event and a 100-year flood event shouldn't be

happening that often. Back to 2019, pre that, FEMA goes out and they map the borough, and they map every community that chooses to participate across the country. The local municipality has to adopt those maps, and along with those, you adopt the federal regulations as your own, which is what Juneau has done and what many other communities do. Our federal regulations that we adopt as our own here are exactly the same as Miami, Florida, or Boston, or Des Moines, Iowa. It really doesn't matter how different we are, it's more or less the exact same code and, therefore incredibly prescriptive, not tailored, and does not provide a lot of discretion, if any, to the Floodplain Administrator, which is me, as the director, and also the Floodplain Manager, with the acting right now is Forrest Courtney, our Senior Planner, who is on his way to becoming a certified Floodplain Manager. We adopted these maps in 2019, and for those of you who were here, you'll know that in 2019 the river split, and we got a new oxbow, the maps were then already outdated. In order to do this mapping, you have to go out and do the entire length of the river.

The H&H studies hydraulic and hydrologic mapping of the entire river, with each private property owner doing riprap or armoring, with all properties owners doing this for every single project, if we're going to follow the regulations accordingly. For a 100-year flood event that doesn't happen that often you can get through that. If you look back, and if any of you remember when Meander first came in around 2016 or 18, or it might have been 19, it was already cost prohibitive. Now fast forward and we're not just dealing with a 100-year flood, we now have the GLOF, which is more like the impacts of a 500-year flood event that's happening not once, but potentially twice every single year, from here on out. The code simply doesn't have the flexibility or the discretion built in to accommodate this type of circumstance, it was never anticipated and we're the only ones across the nation dealing with GLOFs. Today I met with a property owner, the city manager, and Mr. Ciambor, and there aren't great answers. We are trying our best to work with property owners to keep us compliant with the NFIP, because as long as we are opted in, and I do believe that the community wants to remain opted in and wants to receive the flood insurance benefits through the program, then we need to figure out a way to be successful in doing this program here. The city manager's office, the Assembly, and even Senator Sullivan, have been working hard to work with the feds to try to figure out a path forward for Juneau. Mr. O'Shaughnessy and I have been working on a quick draft of an MOU, of what this could start to look like with FEMA.

I became director in 2018, and in 19, the EPW director, the chief engineer, and the city manager and I were getting together because we were dealing with Meander Way and other properties. We worked with FEMA and their mapping consultants to create what we internally called the No Rise Policy, which essentially said that if we had a flood, and you lost your property that went in the river, essentially, your river's edge, if you were only looking to put riprap back, the armoring, the brocks back, and create the slope that was needed, you can't do a 90 degree angle, you have to have that angle of repose. I'm not an engineer, so bear with me, but you need to have that repose, so it won't just fall, we had it worked out through our internal policy with FEMA, this informal policy was as long as you were only building back your riprap and that angle, you didn't need to do that full modeling of the entire river. You did everything else, though, pre-site work, have your engineer come out to look at the site, do a survey, do an as-built, do your construction designs, make sure they're stamped by an engineer, licensed in Alaska, and also have an as-built post work, and again, stamped. As long as you weren't going past, you weren't encroaching back into the river, we were good. We were really good up until about this past year when that has fallen apart to a greater degree. I think that having that path and option back for us, but maybe on our part we're going to have to be reasonable, we need an engineered, reasonable response that allows the NFIP to allow us to remain in good standing. I think it's reachable, but we need support, and I do know that the manager's office and the assembly are working on it. You have meetings coming up very quickly discussing this and future work, so we're looking forward to working with everyone.

Chair Bryson noted that there is a more stringent level of qualifications that could potentially get us a discount on our flood insurance if the city took extra steps but has discovered since hearing about that, it

might not be practical. Could you maybe speak to that we're doing and everything that we need to be on our level. Ms. Lawhorne replied that we were speaking about the community risk mapping and the community mapping survey. There are some communities where it makes sense for you to have FEMA come out, they'll map your floodplain or special hazard areas, usually for the 100-year flood, and that's all they do. Some communities choose to go even beyond that and map greater risks, it's dependent on what that community faced, it can look different for different places, but you essentially map those risks, you adopt them, the regulations and permitting, typically into code and permitting. You opt in and then usually pay a certain fee, but I would have to check on that. The idea at the end of it is because you've opted in, because you've held yourself to this higher engineered standard, you receive a reduction on your insurance rates. We heard the last time we looked at this, and I think that it was at the beginning of the hazard mitigation planning discussion, maybe about 9 months ago, I believe at that time, our rates weren't high enough that there was really a benefit to do that added level of permitting and regulations to a greater portion of the valley. I can look into the details of that plan a little more and get back to you and submit something in writing to the committee if you like. Mr. Bryson replied that as the GLOF has happened, that this has been mentioned a few times and I asked about this so that it would be on the record. We've looked into the higher level of NFIP, and if it is practical, would the efforts that go in from the city translate into real discounts for the community, and it sounds like you guys are focusing your efforts on the Mendenhall-GLOF area right now anyways.

2. Housing Presentation Slides to AARP Juneau

Mr. Ciambor discussed this topic. Chair Bryson asked how he would rate our housing development activity, is it high, medium, low? Per capita, if we compared our city to another city that was maybe not facing the same housing crisis as us, do we have things in the hopper that are developing, or are we just average right now? How would you rate our housing development skills here in our community? Mr. Ciambor noted the charts in the packet on pages 43 and 44 and said that since COVID, since 2020, everything is increasing, so it's growing. We are currently meeting the 66 new units per year in most years, so that is a good trend. The data also shows that building single-family homes has been the most constant creation in this community for decades. It's right in that 30 to 60 realm every year, so that's the most consistent. It seems like other housing types tend to fluctuate. The other thing that this data is starting to show is the importance of the incentives. We also see that in the volume of applications and the inquiries for the housing fund that developers who are potentially not even considering a housing project because of cost, see this incentive and a potential gap for financing fees, and now all of a sudden they are thinking about how to really make it work. We're seeing higher volume of applications, more interest, and so I think that the housing, I would characterize it as, in good status to be in, and moving forward.

Mayor Weldon asked about the chart on page 44, the top of the column there's a lot of red. Mr. Ciambor replied that this graph is showing permitted and certificate of occupancies not issued, and the red is showing that these certificate occupancies have been permitted but they haven't been closed out. Basically it shows you that there's units to come online, they've been permitted, but they're not live units on the ground for people to live in. Mayor Weldon followed up to say that in other words, they're permitted, they're just not finished, but they're in progress. Mr. Ciambor agreed.

H. COMMITTEE MEMBER / LIAISON COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

- Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) Update – Ms. Schirmer gave an update that they had two meetings since the last LANDS meeting, and the predominant topic has been the Adair – Kennedy pickleball courts, what we're doing, why it hasn't been finished, and that doesn't meet the pickleball needs. They want us to go back to the drawing board on that. We will get more information in November, the plans have been made, there was public comment on the plans, they're saying they didn't see the

plans, standard SOP. The other big topic was the disc golf that's going on over in Douglas currently has plans to expand out to 18 holes on the same footprint. The Jensen-Olson Arboretum commercial use has increased, and they donated 200 pounds of produce and continue to participate in the seed exchange, but have seen a reduction in tourism.

- Docks and Harbors Board Update – no update
- Planning Commission Update – no update
- Mr. Kelly commented that a couple weeks ago he met with Manager Koester, Mr. Bleidorn, Ms. Lawhorne, and Mr. Meyers and had some thoughts about possible modifications to the Affordable Housing Fund and how it's incentivized. My thinking is that there are certain professions that help to make Juneau more livable, for our kids and elders, and I was thinking along the lines of finding some way to incentivize less expensive or more affordable housing for people with maybe professional licenses in those fields, such as teachers, nurses, paraeducators. The rules for the Affordable Housing Fund that will be set for next year, we could have that up for discussion. They would need to be referred to the COW by February of next year in order to continue working with staff on these ideas. I wanted to know what this committee's level of support is. I spoke with Ms. Lawhorne, just before the meeting, and it's my understanding that Mr. Meyers has already started a little bit of work on this, so I just wanted to get your thoughts about that. Chair Bryson replied that we looked into potential housing benefits for police officers as one of the initial brainstorming ideas on how to help recruit police officers, and there were some nuances around that. He's happy to have this as a topic at Lands so that we could maybe get some of those nuances out and likes the idea of being able to incentivize that idea, there's some merit to that. Chair Bryson proposed discussing this with Mr. Kelly a little bit more, and then bring it back to Lands. Mr. Kelly agreed that it was acceptable and asked if committee wanted to give staff any direction to continue working on this. Chair Bryson asked if there are any objection from the committee for Mr. Kelly and himself to work with staff to see if they could develop something. No objections from the Committee, and Chair Bryson confirmed with Mr. Meyers that he would be in touch about this.

I. NEXT MEETING DATE – September 29, 2025

J. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

1. *Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) & Sobering Center Memo 9.08.2025*

K. ADJOURNMENT – 5:43pm