

ASSEMBLY LANDS HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MINUTES

December 1, 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 Alicia Hughes-Skandijs, Paul Kelly, Neil Steininger, Maureen Hall

Additional Assembly Members Present: Christine Woll

Liaisons Present: none

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

Staff Present: Dan Bleidorn, Lands Manager; John King, Deputy Lands Manager; Roxie Duckworth, Lands and Resources Specialist

Members of the Public Present: Brian Holst, JEDC Executive Director

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA – approved as presented

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. November 3, 2025 Draft LHED Minutes – approved as presented

F. AGENDA TOPICS – no action items

G. STAFF REPORTS

1. JEDC – Juneau Economic Indicators and the Implications of Large Infrastructure Projects on the Community

Mr. Holst from JEDC discussed this topic.

Ms. Woll asked about housing permits (page 13), and that there is a lot of intractable problems in Juneau and one of the things we do have some influence over is housing. We don't have full control over how much housing is built in Juneau, but we have some control as a municipality. Looking at the permit graph, I see some significant increases in the last two years and think about when I first started on the assembly, we had a Housing Action Plan that we were just starting to implement, and then pandemic happened. Since then, we've been trying to check off everything in that plan, and we did all the easy stuff and we're starting to do some of the harder things. I know you know a lot of the things that we've been working on, but I also know there's lots of other things that control housing. When you see an uptick in what I see here, high density housing in the last few years, do you think some of that is related to some of the actions the city has been focused on, or is it hard to tell, because there's lots of stuff happening out there in the world. Mr. Holst replied that he would give kudos to the assembly for taking actions to increase housing, and encouraging builders to build. You've tried many things; I agree that it's hard to point to which one is the most effective with providing financial incentives per unit for housing. I think we all read the Agnew Beck report that says that the subsidy might need to be bigger to produce housing, especially in the segment of the population that is struggling the most, which is even hard to call them lower income, because they have decent wages, it's just very expensive to live in our community. So, yes, I think the things that you are doing are the right things to do. I think the biggest challenge is going to be how to

figure out a way to make housing for the group that can afford the least, but that still needs the housing. I think creative ideas like community land trusts would be really worth the assembly taking a closer look at, because it's still a private, market-driven approach, you just remove the land ownership component from it. Of course, land is a valuable resource, so that's part of the challenge, figuring out how you can do that. But everything else in that process can be sustainable.

Ms. Hall asked about our aging population and the need for caregivers. Can you talk about any initiatives to increase the number of caregivers available for this population. Mr. Holst replied that JEDC has another initiative, the Southeast Regional Elder Care Coalition, it's a group of about over 100 organizations and people that have been addressing the issue that there aren't enough workers to meet the needs of seniors. We have seniors that don't have the services that they need, but they also have an affordability challenge. It's not very different than childcare, in that you have people that need childcare so that they can go to work, often they are the ones that can't afford the childcare, and we're finding the same thing with seniors. There are programs that can provide some assistance to the lowest income seniors, but then there's a gap there where seniors that would like some services, but they can't find the services. Right now, the group has been focused on trying to increase access for people like veterans, for example. There are some programs that support veterans that are easier to bridge some of the gaps, meaning there are some services, because you're a veteran, you can become eligible services, and these providers can get reimbursement for services. There's a lot of work to be done, including the amount of work that needs to be done for aging in place. We have over 1,000 more seniors living alone today than we did 10 years ago in their homes, living by themselves, meaning every year that goes by, they're at increased risk of falling because their many of their homes weren't originally built to adequately meet the needs of seniors. What we want to avoid is for seniors to have an accident in their home, because if you fall down and get hurt in your home or anywhere, if you get hurt when you're a senior, it becomes much more difficult to recover. There's not only the workforce problem, but there's also the infrastructure changes that need to be made in these homes if we're going to hope that our seniors can safely age in place.

Chair Hughes-Skandijis asked about housing and relativity, with the example of our housing was 50% higher, now it's 20-30% higher, how much do we interpret that as things getting better or coming down here, or is it just getting more expensive everywhere else? It was very hard to live in Juneau, and now it's getting really hard to live anywhere, how do we look for things like that? Mr. Holst replied that unfortunately, the increase in housing in Juneau is outpacing the rate of inflation, so it's getting bad in real terms in Juneau, but it's getting worse in the rest of the United States. The reason we point to this as important is because we have a migration problem, and when we ask people why they like Juneau or why they don't like Juneau, housing and affordability is often mentioned. It's particularly insightful for us when we had the wonderful opportunity that both of our mines allowed us to do a survey of all of their workers that work in Juneau, but live outside. We have the highest number of mining jobs we've ever had in Juneau, they are the best paying jobs in our community, yet at the same time, they have the highest percentage that we've ever had of them not living in Juneau. The mines have had to accommodate, because they need the workers, their schedules allow people to come and go. When we surveyed them, they say that housing is primarily, there are some other cost factors, it is relatively cheaper. The relativity is important to us to be able to keep people to choose to live in Juneau. There are a lot of things that people like about Juneau, but if that delta between here and Idaho gets smaller, that improves our chances of those people making that choice to stay. In the case of both of our mines, they offer incentives if you choose to come to Juneau and stay in our community, you actually get paid better than if you were to choose to commute. So it's the migration element, the attractiveness element.

Chair Hughes-Skandijis asked about housing and affordability. Looking at the chart of Juneau losing people every year, could you characterize the top three things in terms of how you track what you see as those motivators. Mr. Holst replied that there's a little bit of indications that the schools, while Juneau schools

are well supported, I was on the school board, we have good schools within Alaska, but relative to the outside, Alaskan schools are not perceived as strong for people with a family. We're seeing a little bit of evidence of that, and there's been some evidence, specifically in the mining group about outdoor recreation that appeals to different types of miners. The ATV area that was created, I think, is a positive for them, because that's a type of recreation that some people expect to be able to see in the big outdoors in Alaska that really wasn't available to many people in Juneau, but now it is. Those are some of the other elements that surprised us when we heard that recreation wasn't perceived high, and then when we went back and did a second round of survey, we understood what they were talking about, and there's a specific kind of recreation that some people enjoy that they could not do at all in Juneau.

Mr. Kelly asked about land trust and if there are any recommendations if we were to bring up a similar concept, or discuss what we currently have in Juneau, any recommendations for what this committee in the future could be looking at on future agendas? Mr. Holst replied that land is critical to this process. There is one land trust in our community, Juneau Housing Trust, we've had been in many conversations with them. They produce approximately one home per year, and they are interested in accelerating that group. I think if the levers of the assembly could choose to, or could consider, a home-built program that wasn't winter only, because the school district has a home-build program, they build one home during the school year. Is there interest in providing a training opportunity for young people in housing in the summertime? We know that there is also a positive inclination from the university to do something like that. There's a funding question that would be important to build, not only for workers, but the unique model that the Housing Trust has used has been to use student workers to help build the houses. Then, of course, land, to go to scale, we need land. We also need construction finance. If we had the ability to lend resources for construction finance, it could be that the housing could be very sustainable. You just want to make the housing is as affordable as possible, and if we can have low-cost construction finance for homes that are targeted to a lower-income population, that would be Incredibly helpful for building homes.

Ms. Hall asked about the immigrant population in Juneau and the quiet out-migration of immigrants from our community due to the current policies coming down from the federal administration, are you tracking that at all with local businesses, knowing that so many construction workers and caregivers are from the immigrant population. I'm just wondering if that's something JEDC would have interest in, tracking for our local community. Mr. Holst replied we were not tracking that but the Affordable Care Act lack of subsidies, I believe, is a threat to our community. If you go back to our cost of living, we have the highest healthcare cost of living of in any community, we're in the top 5 Alaskan communities in the U.S. These are communities of a certain size, our size and bigger in that survey, and when they lose those subsidies, which they will, they're gone unless Congress takes action, that's going to make it very expensive for those people to stay in our community. It's just going to be one more driver to exit out because even if you have to buy healthcare on the market, you're going to buy less expensive healthcare outside of Alaska than you would inside of Alaska. That's another threat that we see for as a push out or pull out from, with these national factors that make it hard.

No motion is requested at this meeting.

2. Duran Construction Property Donation Request of Park Property

Mr. Bleidorn discussed this topic. Mr. Kelly asked about mitigation and before the Southeast Alaska Land Trust (SEALT) or whether we would take any ownership, that remediation would be completed and neither us nor the SEALT would be on the hook for implementing any of the remediation. Mr. Bleidorn replied that's correct. The concept that we've been working with the Department of Justice on would be mitigation is complete and the idea of the mitigation is protecting the property and wetlands in perpetuity. The Durans would then be able to bring it up to the standards to remove the litigation potential from the Department of Justice, and then long-term ownership is the main question. So yes,

that would be complete and then we're looking at all the history and documentation of what's taking place on that property, and that's some red flags that we're working with SEALT on, to make sure that all the parties involved have all the information that's up to date.

Mr. Steininger asked about the multi-modal path and SEALT, he's seen the letter from the DOJ that makes it pretty clear that they would allow us to build the multi-modal path through that property, even though it seems like traditionally it wouldn't be necessarily allowed if it stayed in private ownership. Do we have any indication from the DOJ whether that would still be allowable if the SEALT were to take the property instead, or is that piece up in the air? Mr. Bleidorn replied that in discussing with the Department of Justice, that's definitely something that they would write into the agreements, Meeting with the SEALT late last week, they're interested in the city also having that right. It might be something that is platted as an easement with a land transfer, or it's something that we work with them individually on after the fact. But they're also interested in that path, they realize that it has value to the community. A lot of times with the SEALT, recreation is part of their goal, so it does fit in with that, but it's something that, if the city doesn't move forward with acquisition, SEALT does. I'll be working with the Parks Department to try to secure that easement as soon as possible.

Mr. Kelly asked about an exception, what the SEALT would be able to do as far as developing it, because we seem to require some sort of exception in order to build and to make this parkland, to put a trail on it. Do you know what the SEALT is thinking of doing with this land, if they were to acquire it? Mr. Bleidorn replied that he thinks that their main goal is protection of the wetlands. As part of the mitigation, there's some gravel extraction ponds that have been in violation, I think, since the 70s, and with mitigation, they're going to work on protecting that fish habitat. This is all wetlands that ties into Switzer Creek, which is a protected type of creek. I think their goal would be, to some extent, protection of the wetlands is the priority, and then secondary would be bird and migratory bird protection, but also wildlife viewing. There's already an existing small Kingfisher trail that touches this property and probably crosses it a little bit, so there would likely be some enhancement to that regardless of which party owns it. I think their goal is very similar to ours and as part of the mitigation and part of the issues that the current owners have been having, long-term protection is the only outcome, regardless of who owns it.

No motion is being requested at this meeting and that this topic will go to the next PRAC meeting for review.

3. CBJ Christmas Tree & Firewood Harvesting Policy

Mr. Bleidorn discussed this topic. No discussion from the committee.

H. COMMITTEE MEMBER / LIAISON COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS – no updates or discussions

I. NEXT MEETING DATE – January 26, 2026

J. ADJOURNMENT – 5:39pm