ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

November 04, 2024 at 6:00 PM

Assembly Chambers/Zoom Webinar

A. CALL TO ORDER

Deputy Mayor Smith called the Assembly Committee of the Whole to order at 6:01pm on November 4, 2024.

B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – Led by Ms. Hall

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!"*

B. ROLL CALL

Assemblymembers present: Mayor Beth Weldon, Deputy Mayor Greg Smith, Assemblymembers Wade Bryson, Alicia Hughes-Skandijs, Christine Woll, Paul R. Kelly, Ella Adkison, Neil Steininger, and Maureen Hall.

Staff present: City Manager Katie Koester, Deputy Manager Robert Barr, Municipal Attorney Emily Wright, Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen, Meeting Tech Kevin Allen, Assistant Attorneys Sherri Layne and Clinton Mitchell, Engineering and Public Works Director Denise Koch, Engineering and Public Works Deputy Director Nate Rumsey, and Chief CIP Engineer John Bohan.

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA – *approved by unanimous consent.*

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. April 15, 2024 Assembly COW DRAFT Minutes

MOTION by Mayor Weldon to approve the April 15, 2024 Assembly Committee of the Whole draft minutes, with grammatical corrections, and asked for unanimous consent. ***Hearing no objection, motion approved by unanimous consent.***

F. AGENDA TOPICS

2. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Flood Presentation

Philip Martinez and Dan Allard, from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and Keith Anderson, from the Flood Defense Group, which was contracted with USACE, presented about HESCO barriers. Mr. Anderson said he worked with HESCO for approximately 17 years and that HESCO was the primary provider of flood defense barriers for the USACE.

Mr. Anderson said the HESCO barriers were a bunch of preconnected, welded, wire mesh panels lined with geotextile fabric that allowed them to be filled up with dirt, sand, or other locally available material. He said the product was designed to be stackable to allow for higher protection and that the modular design lent itself to being able to deal with debris impact and other threats without catastrophic failure of the entire barrier. Mr. Anderson noted that the weight of the HESCO may cause them to sink depending on the soil composition, but that it had never caused a catastrophic problem.

Mr. Anderson said HESCO were primarily used as flood and debris flow barriers, but have also been used for erosion control, retaining walls, and perimeter walls for military applications. He said the USACE tested the HESCO barriers against wave impact, debris impact, overtopping, and seepage.

Mr. Kelly asked about repairing individual HESCO cells. Mr. Anderson said it took approximately 20 minutes to fix any specific cell, but that specifics depended on the damage. He provided examples of reinforcing with sandbags or adding a plastic sheet to reduce seepage.

Mr. Steininger asked about longevity. Mr. Anderson said the manufacturer specified a five-year lifespan, but that he began to see stress tears in the fabric between eight to ten years deployed in regions with harsh ultraviolet light. Ms. Adkison asked about rain affecting the cells. Mr. Anderson said there was no known adverse effect of fresh water on the fabric, but that saltwater could cause rust issues.

Mayor Weldon asked about the fill material. Mr. Anderson responded sand was preferred.

Mr. Bryson asked about how the barriers come down at the end of their life. Mr. Anderson said there were generally two options: the first was to use a beam to lift the barriers and have the fill material fall out the bottom or to take an excavator and rip the faces of the HESCOs open and then use the bucket to pick up the wire and fabric section, leaving the fill material behind.

Mr. Allard discussed Public Law 84-99 Advanced Measures, the law that gave USACE authority to provide emergency activities in support of local governments to help protect against flooding. He said the Glacier Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) qualified and that CBJ had met the requirements. He said USACE would pay for the barriers and provide technical assistance, but that construction, permitting, and removal of the barriers would be the responsibility of CBJ.

Mr. Martinez said USACE technical experts were working with CBJ to develop a plan; he said they walked the riverbanks, looked at aerial footage, and talked to residents about damage to help determine HESCO placement. Mr. Martinez said Phase I of the HESCO installation would cover Marion Drive to Killewich Drive to Meander Way, while Phase II would cover most of the remaining developed properties along the river.

Mr. Martinez said the General Investigation Study was the long-term solution to the GLOF, and would involve USACE looking at hydrological data, environmental studies, real estate, and economic cost-benefit ratios. He said they require a lot of research and data gathering and take time to develop.

Mr. Kelly asked if implementing the Phase I HESCO barriers might cause more damage in other areas. Mr. Bohan said they have not done any studies regarding the HESCO barriers yet, but that Michael Baker Internation (MBI) would be under CBJ contract soon to provide hydraulic modeling and new inundation maps. He said they expected data from MBI in late winter or early spring which would help guide planning. Mr. Bohan said the priority was protecting the almost 300 homes that were damaged in the 2024 flood.

Ms. Woll asked about bank erosion. Mr. Bohan said bank erosion was a significant concern, which was why they were recommending bank stabilization or armoring protection and placing the HESCO barriers as far from the bank as possible. Mr. Allard said Public Law 84-99 Advanced Measures did not handle erosion, but that other USACE programs such as Streambank stabilization did and that it required a significant cost share.

Ms. Adkison asked about including View Drive in Phase II. Mr. Bohan said he does not have concrete information yet, as his primary focus had been on preparing for Phase I.

Mr. Smith asked about dredging the Mendenhall River or building a levy. Mr. Martinez said those options fall into the General Investigative Study. Mr. Smith asked if actions can be taken without the General Investigative Study. Mr. Martinez said no.

3. Downtown Employee Office Space: Burns Building

Manager Koester asked for direction from the Assembly to work on a business condo association. She said CBJ was negotiating purchasing two floors of the Burns Building; this business condo association would be with the Permanent Fund Corporation which would own the third floor.

Mr. Bryson asked whether the condo dues would include maintenance. Manager Koester said the initial estimate for condo dues would be $650,000 annually, which would include maintenance and repairs. She said the condo dues go back into the building, which CBJ would be the majority owner of.

Mr. Smith asked what CBJ was currently paying for leases. Manager Koester said it was about $800,000 annually.

MOTION by Mayor Weldon to direct staff to research and develop documents for a condominium association in relation to the Burns Building.

OBJECTION by Ms. Adkison. She said she objected to taking the space away from the Permanent Fund Corporation and the State, which have been moving jobs outside of Juneau, and worried this might prevent jobs from coming back.

Mr. Byson spoke in support of the motion, noting that residents had voted down the construction of a new city hall.

Roll Call Vote:

Yes: Hall, Steininger, Kelly, Woll, Hughes-Skandijs, Byrson, Mayor Weldon, Deputy Mayor Smith

No: Adkison

Motion Passed: 8 Yeas to 1 Nay

4. Short Term Rental Task Force

Mr. Smith provided the charging document for the creation of the Short-Term Rental Task Force (STRTF). Ms. Hughes-Skandijs said she would like to change the charging document so that the STRTF's focus was on creating a matrix that evaluated and recommended various regulator actions and to remove the charge where they reviewed the number of rentals. She said she would prefer that staff gather that information and provide it to the STFTF. She wanted to make sure that renters were included on the task force.

Ms. Woll said she wanted to make sure the charging document made it clear that the Assembly was looking for regulation options, not to answer the question on whether or not to regulate.

Mayor Weldon said that to make decisions, the STRTF needed to have data, most of which would be provided by staff. Mayor Weldon said she did not ask the proposed members if they owned or rented; she said she was looking for people with a variety of viewpoints.

Mr. Smith noted the Assembly had the ability to introduce legislation regardless of the STRTF's recommendations.

MOTION by Mayor Weldon to move the Short Term Rental Task Force charging document to the full Assembly and asked for unanimous consent. ***Hearing no objection, motion passed by unanimous consent.***

5. Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) with Tlingit & Haida

Manager Koester said these Memoranda of Agreement with Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA) for public safety and solid waste supported the Assembly's goal to strengthen government-to-government relationships. She said it also leveraged resources as CCTHITA has access to different programs and resources than CBJ, and these MOAs allowed both governments to better utilize resources.

Manager Koester said these MOAs do not change daily business but established transparency and committed CBJ to developing a shared relationship in a structured way.

Mr. Kelly asked how the solid waste agreement might impact composting. Manager Koester said at the Public Works and Facilities Committee in July 2024, the committee made a motion to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for composting. She said CBJ had a $2.5 million dollar grant to help develop a composing facility. She said CCTHITA had received approximately 15 million dollars in grants to look at compositing, recycling, and other waste stream diversion methods for the Southeast region. She said the MOA does not require or specify how CBJ spends the grant money, which will require going through the Assembly process. She said the MOA requires CBJ and CCTHITA to talk to each other about planning efforts. She said there was nothing in the MOA that precluded CBJ from working with private entities.

MOTION by Mayor Weldon to forward the memoranda of agreements with CCTHITA on public safety and solid waste to the full Assembly and asked for unanimous consent. ***Hearing no objection, motion passed by unanimous consent.***

6. Update on Sheltering of Unhoused Population

Mr. Barr said the Assembly discussed sheltering and the unhoused population in July after CBJ was unable to find a good location for a summer campground. He noted the July meeting was after the Supreme Court decision of City of Grants Pass v Johnson, which allowed enforcing restrictions on camping on public property. Mr. Barr said CBJ did limited enforcement activity since then and the enforcement activity that had taken place was conducted by high-level CBJ employees, such as the policy chief or deputy police chief. He said enforcement action had fallen into two categories; when a specific individual was disrupting the use of a specific facility or other individuals, or when campsite had grown large enough that impacts could no longer be mitigated, with impacts being human waste, garbage, criminal activity, and stolen property.

Mr. Barr said municipalities continued to struggle with this issue and there is no perfect solution. He said the geographical impact of dispersed camping was different this year, as more took place in the Valley near Teal Street and away from Mill Street. Mr. Barr said there was strong internal consensus amongst CBJ staff that there were more struggles with the Mill Street campground and area around it than in the Teal Street area this year.

Mr. Barr said the Cold Weather Emergency Shelter, operated by St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP), opened on October 15. He said SVdP had largely new staff operating the shelter this year, but they did lots of training and many of the staff hired were former residents of the shelter.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs asked if CBJ did enforcement activity after the Grants Pass decision that they would not have done before. Mr. Barr said yes, but the amount they did was limited.

Mr. Kelly asked if there were concerns about the cold weather shelter reaching capacity. Mr. Barr said there were no improvements to capacity, but they did install interior restrooms. Mr. Barr said he had two different capacity concerns – first the physical capacity limit of how many cots can safely be in the space, and second the staff capacity to manage the environment and increased number of people in the space. He said addressing the physical capacity limit would be easier than the staff capacity limit.

Mr. Bryson said crime in the Teal Street area went down when the cold weather shelter opened and supported funding a similar shelter year-round.

Ms. Adkison asked about creating another summer campground, should a location become available. Mr. Barr said SVdP did not have capacity to run a shelter year-round, when he most recently asked. Mr. Barr said he was skeptical that an unsupervised campground anywhere in CBJ would be possible or effective.

G. STAFF REPORTS

7. 2025 CBJ Meeting Calendar

The Assembly discussed potential edits to the calendar. The final draft of the 2025 CBJ Meeting Calendar would go to the 11/18 Assembly meeting for approval.

H. NEXT MEETING DATE: December 2, 2024; 6:00p.m.

I. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

8. Red Folder Item: CBJ & CCTHIA 2017 Letter of Intent

9. Red Folder Items: Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) with Tlingit & Haida

10. Red Folder: HESCO Basics Presentation

11. RED FOLDER: US Army Corps of Engineers - Mendenhall Glacier Outburst Floods Presentation

J. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the Committee of the Whole, the meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.