



ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

November 3, 2025 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 Monday, November 3, 2025.

B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – Led by Mr. Brooks

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: Mayor Beth Weldon, Deputy Mayor Smith, Assemblymembers: Alicia Hughes-Skandijs, Christine Woll, Paul R. Kelly, Ella Adkison, Neil Steininger, Maureen Hall, and Nathaniel "Nano" Brooks.

Assemblymembers absent: None

Staff present: City Manager Katie Koester, Deputy City Manager Robert Barr, Attorney Sherri Layne, Deputy Municipal Clerk Andi Hirsh, Community Development Director Jill Lawhorne, Senior Planners Minta Montalbo and Forrest Courtney, Communications & Engagement Director Ashley Heimburger, Visitor Industry Director Alexandra "Alix" Pierce, Engineering and Public Works Director Denise Koch, Assistant Attorneys Nicole Lynch and Clinton Mitchell, Lands Director Dan Bleidorn, Special Project Planning Manager Rob Dumochel, Parks and Recreation Director Marc Wheeler, Permit Center Manager Jason Larson, Engagement Specialist Phil Huebschen, Meeting Tech Kevin Allen.

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Visitor Industry Task Force (VITF) 2 was removed from the agenda by Mayor Weldon. The amended agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. September 8, 2025 Assembly COW Minutes - Draft

MOTION by Mr. Kelly to postpone approval of the September 8, 2025 minutes to the next meeting in order to improve clarity on a motion. **Hearing no objection, the motion was approved.**

F. AGENDA TOPICS

1. West Douglas Master Planning and Goldbelt Corporation LLC's West Douglas Development Phase I: Port Development and Infrastructure Project

Ms. Koester said staff were looking for approval to start master planning for West Douglas, and to move forward with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Goldbelt for city services that Goldbelt needed for their development. She said CBJ had not received an official application for Goldbelt's development of West Douglas at this time but had received a draft application.

Mr. Kelly disclosed that his stepchildren are Goldbelt shareholders. He noted that he had consulted with the attorney, who advised that no conflict existed, and that he would not be recusing himself. No objection was raised.

Ms. Lawhorne noted that CBJ is in the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan and that there are benefits to developing the West Douglas Area Plan concurrently rather than waiting for completion. She said parts of West Douglas were categorized as a New Growth Area, which would allow some development to begin before a master plan was in place. Ms. Lawhorne said she was looking for direction from the Assembly on the West Douglas Master Plan process, including scope, cost, timeframe, and scheduling.

Ms. Lawhorne said Goldbelt's proposed development was outside the urban service area and that traditional city services like water, wastewater, transit, and emergency services were not available. Ms. Lawhorne said Goldbelt's proposed development would require a conditional use permit which would go before the Planning Commission. She said that while Goldbelt was only looking at the first phase of development right now, the Community Development Department (CDD) and the Planning Commission were required to look at the entire land area and future phases when considering a conditional use permit. She said any appeals would go to the Assembly, which is why they should reserve themselves from being involved in low-level decisions about the project. She said the Assembly could work with the Law Department to draft a MOU with Goldbelt on high level service and policy decisions. She added that, since CDD had not yet received an official application, all current discussions were preliminary and theoretical.

Mr. Steininger asked about a timeline, once an official application was received. Ms. Lawhorne said it depended heavily on the information and data in the application. She said, for example, that a traffic impact analysis could take months to complete and if it was included in the application then the process would be faster than if it had not started yet. She said that once the applicant submitted all required information, it normally took about three months to come before the Planning Commission.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs asked whether a Conditional Use Permit would be affected if CBJ did not provide water and sewer services while Goldbelt's development proposed them. Ms. Lawhorne confirmed that it would.

Ms. Woll said there appeared to be some debate between the potential applicant and CDD about whether a master planning process was required. She asked if it would be better for the Planning Commission to figure out whether that was required before moving forward. Ms. Lawhorne said the potential applicant could proceed with development while the master plan was drafted. She said it was important for CBJ to develop a master plan because it would include CBJ land and that any development in a New Growth Area required a master plan to proceed concurrently with it. She said once a master plan was in place it would highlight the uses and infrastructure wanted, and would be used to update CBJ code, such as zoning, allowed uses, the table of dimensional standards. She said it's ultimately the code which regulates the development and code was based on the master plan.

Ms. Layne cautioned the Assembly against discussing the specifics of a single applicant, as doing so could prevent the Assembly from hearing appeals. She suggested the Assembly develop a MOU for large infrastructure or policy decisions with Goldbelt and to let the Planning Commission care for the conditional use permit.

Mr. Smith asked about New Growth Areas. Ms. Lawhorne explained that comprehensive plans were conceptual and the boundaries within them were somewhat conceptual as well, which was why the New Growth Areas were indicated by broad circles on the map. She said this was different from a zoning map which had hard boundaries. Ms. Lawhorne said that Goldbelt's first phase of development was outside these New Growth circles, but that future phases of the plan were in the new growth area. She said CBJ required applicants to conduct the full build-out and analysis.

Ms. Woll asked where the West Douglas Master Plan would have been on the priority list if not for this potential applicant's development. Ms. Koester said it was a high priority as it was a requirement for planning a second crossing to Douglas and CBJ had 900 acres of potentially developable property. Ms. Lawhorne said she would have requested a CIP(Capital Improvement Plan) item for an economic development feasibility study in the upcoming budget cycle.

Mr. Smith asked what collaboration with Goldbelt would look like in developing the master plan. Ms. Lawhorne said that given the amount of land the CBJ and Goldbelt owned in the area, collaboration on roads, infrastructure, and housing was essential. She noted that since the Comprehensive Plan's adoption, CBJ had not created a master plan for a New Growth Area, so a new process would need to be developed.

MOTION by Mayor Weldon to direct staff to provide a scope of work, including process and budget, for the West Douglas Master Plan and return it back to the Committee of the Whole for consideration.

OBJECTION by Ms. Woll to provide a comment. She asked for staff to also provide some guidance to the Assembly on their role as both a policy-making body and an appeal-body. She removed her objection.

Hearing no objection, the motion passed by unanimous consent.

MOTION by Mayor Weldon to direct staff to draft a Memorandum of Understanding for services between the CBJ and Goldbelt Corporation LLC that addressed areas of critical concern including workforce housing, emergency services, public infrastructure, and transportation. She said the MOU should consider mitigating the impacts of the development and determine minimum service levels.

OBJECTION by Ms. Hughes-Skandijs. She said it felt too soon for this motion. Ms. Lawhorne said that CDD had anticipated having an application and providing specific examples or guidance on what an MOU might look like. Ms. Koester said the MOU was something the Assembly controlled as a policy-making body. Ms. Woll agreed with Ms. Hughes-Skandijs that this was too soon.

Mayor Weldon said she did not want it to appear like this project was approved already, but thought they needed to be proactive given the complexity and magnitude of the proposed project.

Mr. Brooks asked if there was a way to create a general area understanding that would affect any proposed applicant. Ms. Koester said their intention was for a specific MOU with Goldbelt for specific city services.

Ms. Hall spoke in support of the motion, saying it would give the Assembly additional knowledge and information to guide decision-making.

OBJECTION by Mr. Smith for purposes of a question. He asked where an MOU normally happened in the planning process. Ms. Lawhorne said few to no projects had an MOU; she said this project was different because it was occurring outside the urban service development area. She said typically when reviewing applications, they are already in areas that receive city services. Mr. Smith asked about the proposed development by Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA) up Eaglecrest road. Ms. Lawhorne said that proposed development was outside the urban service area. Ms. Koester said CBJ treated that as sovereign land, which was why they had not engaged with them in any planning process. She said CBJ was discussing services with them, but as there was a government-to-government relationship, it would look different than an agreement with Goldbelt. Mr. Smith maintained his objection.

Mr. Brooks asked, hypothetically, what if Goldbelt developed their own private infrastructure and private emergency services. Ms. Lawhorne said that people leave West Douglas, where they would impact CBJ services, such as treatment at the CBJ owned hospital, usage of CBJ

airport, or usage of CBJ and DOT roads.

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: Mayor Weldon, Hall, Steininger, Brooks

Nays: Deputy Mayor Smith, Kelly, Adkison, Woll, Hughes-Skandijs

Motion to draft an MOU for services with Goldbelt Corporation LLC failed: 4 Yeas to 5 Nays.

2. Tourism Policy

Visitor Industry Director Alix Pierce provided information regarding tourism policy, specifically around formalizing berthing agreements with cruise lines and examining the potential for legislating limits on ships and/or visitors.

Providing background information, Ms. Pierce said Juneau was one of the few ports in the world that had a mix of public and private docks and cruise ship limits. She said Juneau currently had two negotiated voluntary limits, a 5-ship limit and a daily passenger cap. She said these agreements provided a constraint that the cruise line agencies applied when scheduling ships. She said the limits apply to the entire borough, not just downtown Juneau.

Ms. Pierce said the Assembly was working off policy recommendations made by the first Visitor Industry Task Force (VITF) which concluded in 2020. One of those recommendations was that CBJ take a more active role in ship scheduling. She said the Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska (CLAA) currently did the scheduling, which was complex and based on historical priority berthing systems. Ms. Pierce said CLAA scheduled CBJ owned docks as well as the private docks.

She said if CBJ wanted to manage our own facilities it would involve entering into berthing agreements directly with cruise lines and that if predictability and stability were a priority, her recommendation was to memorialize the historical priority berthing system used by CLAA, compared to going out to bid. She said this would increase the amount of agency over our own facilities. Ms. Pierce said these agreements could include terms found in the voluntary Memoranda of Agreements (MOAs) with cruise lines, such as passenger or ship limits, with stiff penalties for breaking the agreement. She said it would not change Docks and Harbors operations. She said all the cruise lines that currently visit Juneau were interested in entering into long-term agreements at CBJ docks. She noted that these agreements would not apply to the private docks, but that cruise lines that utilize private docks also utilized CBJ docks, and any cruise line that signed the agreement would be subject to the terms of compliance.

Mr. Steininger asked about the historical priority berthing system. Ms. Pierce said it was a framework used by CLAA to schedule at ports throughout Southeast Alaska. She said her recommendation for direct berthing agreements with the cruise lines would be looking at the current customers and their schedules and offering them space first. Mr. Steininger asked about the public good of continuing with the historical priority berthing system. Ms. Pierce said the agreements would be in place for five years, so they would not be locked in forever. She said that if CBJ put their docks out to bid it would disrupt scheduling for the entire Southeast

region. She said she would be more comfortable moving forward with five-year agreements preserving what was already in place, while working with other ports in the region through Port Communities of Alaska to develop a regional strategy.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs asked about closing CBJ docks and releasing cruise lines from the agreements as a method of enforcing cruise ship limits. Ms. Pierce said cruise ship limits would be better served by having the cruise lines interested in berthing at CBJ docks, where the formal agreement would bind them.

Mr. Brooks asked about new cruise lines. Ms. Pierce said that all the new cruise lines coming to Juneau in 2026 had committed to signing the MOA. She said that all major cruise lines that visit Alaska or have announced plans to begin visiting Alaska are members of the Cruise Line International Association (CLIA) who helped negotiate the MOAs.

Ms. Pierce provided an update to the Bar Harbor case; Bar Harbor, Maine passed a cruise ship limiting ballot initiative that was challenged in court. She said the final ruling showed that communities could legislate limits with supportive data. She said Juneau had several years of community survey data, plus the limits that cruise lines agreed to. She said they will be asking the new Visitor Industry Task Force (VITF) to consider long-term goals for the community and what sort of data would be needed to support growth. She said the MOAs limiting passengers were based on current infrastructure and emergency services capacity. She said CBJ was not looking for any decisions tonight, but that as the VITF discussion progressed, to be prepared to have a nuanced discussion about whether legislation was something the Assembly wanted to pursue, and if so, what kind of legal opportunities and constraints it might include.

Mr. Brooks asked how much the Bar Harbor government had to spend on litigation. Ms. Pierce said she did not know the exact figure but that it was over a million dollars. *(Clerk's Note: Reporting from July 2025 put the amount at \$1,165,788).*

Mr. Steininger asked if there were any Bar Harbor appeals planned. Ms. Pierce said she had not seen any indication that parties may appeal.

Ms. Woll said she would like to see some speed on this issue and would like to have this discussion before the Assembly makes decisions about Goldbelt's North Douglas dock development.

Mr. Kelly said he was interested in the idea of legislating limits based off data, including community needs and infrastructure.

Mayor Weldon said she needed more information before knowing if she'd like to legislate limits. She said one of her concerns was that if they legislated a five-ship limit and Juneau had seven docks, that CBJ docks may sit empty.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs expressed an interest in discussing legislative limits, noting that ordinances were more legally binding than agreements.

Ms. Hall supported the idea of having a discussion of legislating limits based on data-supported parameters for sustainable growth.

Mr. Steininger expressed concerns about legislating limits, noting that Juneau would be the first community to do so by legislation and the Bar Harbor decision was from a different Circuit Court and was therefore not legally binding if Juneau was sued.

Mr. Brooks expressed concern about potential litigation costs to Juneau.

Deputy Mayor Smith said he looked forward to seeing comments from the new VITF.

Ms. Pierce said they will be asking VITF what data CBJ needed to collect to consider parameters for growth. She said if the Assembly chose to legislate limits, one direction that could be taken would be to increase limits when certain infrastructure was built or current problems had diminished – she cited reduced traffic issues and expanded shore excursions spreading visitors throughout the community. She said that regardless of whether the Assembly chose to legislate limits in the future or continued to work under voluntary agreements, she thought it was necessary to have proactive conversations about under what conditions growth could occur.

3. Visitor Industry Task Force (VTIF) 2

[This item was pulled from the agenda at the request of Mayor Weldon]

4. Telephone Hill Update

Ms. Koester acknowledged the difficulty of the Telephone Hill discussion for both the community and the Assembly, noting a shared goal of acting in the best interest of the community. She said that Telephone Hill represented some of the most developable property in Juneau, and the Assembly's goal to create maximum density housing there was in response to Juneau's housing crisis.

She said tenants were given legal notice to leave the dwellings by November 1, 2025, and that currently only 4 of 13 units were still occupied. She said they planned to follow the legal process through the court system if necessary.

She said that as dwellings were being vacated they were doing hazardous materials testing, a necessary step for developing bid specifications for demolition. She said they hoped to bid, get a contract, and demo the properties over winter, weather permitting. She said they were actively creating a list of developer contacts and planned to provide outreach to developers that would help inform either a solicitation, request for qualifications, or request for proposals. Ms. Koester said that putting together proposals cost developers a lot of time and effort, and that CBJ had a better chance of getting a real project if CBJ demonstrated commitment to the project.

Mr. Brooks asked why First Forty Feet was hired before there was community input on Telephone Hill. Ms. Koester said First Forty Feet was hired to do community outreach.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs asked about attracting developers from further away. Ms. Koester said solicitations have not gone out yet so there was no reason they could not reach out to

developers further away, but that they were focusing on the Pacific Northwest since those developers would have more regionally specific expertise and shorter travel times.

Mayor Weldon asked why Telephone Hill and not a different property. Ms. Koester said developing Telephone Hill had the opportunity to move the needle on Juneau's housing issues. She said it was the largest parcel of CBJ land downtown and was uniquely suited to workforce housing due to walkability, access to transit, and utilities and infrastructure already in place. She said CBJ owned two other downtown properties, 450 Whittier and 2nd and Franklin; she said they were working with a developer on 2nd and Franklin as well.

Ms. Woll asked about the State of Alaska's interest in returning the land to CBJ. Ms. Hughes-Skandijs said that the Governor had asked the State to identify everything that was underutilized that could be divested, and Telephone Hill was one of the properties identified.

Mr. Smith asked about the timeline for outreach with developers. Ms. Koester said outreach and meetings with developers would happen after demolition had started.

Mayor Weldon asked about saving the phone switchboard. Ms. Koester said that was possible.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs said that CBJ needed to develop all their downtown properties, not just one of them, to provide housing and that each property had unique features that would dictate what kind of housing could be built on them.

Ms. Hall mentioned that Telephone Hill has received a substantial amount of community involvement, attention from the Assembly, and staff time; she said she would like to see the same level of engagement for the people living in homeless shelters or in tents.

Mr. Smith asked what would happen if CBJ could not find a developer who was willing to build 150 units. Ms. Koester said the Assembly would be making decisions regarding cost of the project versus affordability. She said that after active engagement with potential developers, they hoped to have several different proposals which would have different levels of viability. She said the likelihood of finding a viable project was high, as it was an attractive property.

Mr. Brooks asked about relocating the structures. Ms. Koester said they have not put any effort into what a relocation would look like. She said because it would disturb the houses, there would have to be significant hazardous material measures taken.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs, speaking to members of the public in the audience who opposed the development of Telephone Hill, thanked them for coming and engaging in the process. She said the Assembly made a decision they don't agree with, but that did not mean they were not heard. She said Telephone Hill can be a beautiful gem of a neighborhood with a rich history and an attractive development opportunity to provide housing for young citizens.

G. STAFF REPORTS

Mayor Weldon acknowledged the recent passing of Pete Carran, noting that he was the longtime voice behind *News of the North* and a respected broadcast journalist and Hall of Famer. She stated that he was a valued member of the community and would be missed.

H. NEXT MEETING DATE - DECEMBER 1, 2025

I. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

- 1. 2025-11-03 Goldbelt Memo - Correction to Attachment B listing Applicant**

J. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the Assembly Committee of the Whole, the meeting adjourned at 8:39 p.m.