

**ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE**  
**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**  
Meeting Minutes – August 9, 2021

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The Assembly Committee of the Whole Meeting, held in the Assembly Chambers and broadcasted virtually via Zoom, was called to order by Deputy Mayor Jones at 6:08p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

**Assemblymembers Present:** Loren Jones, Maria Gladziszewski, Carole Triem, Wade Bryson, Alicia Hughes-Skandijs, Greg Smith (via Zoom), Christine Woll, Michelle Hale, and Mayor Beth Weldon.

**Assemblymembers Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** Deputy City Manager Robert Barr, Assistant City Attorney Sherri Layne, Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen, Deputy Clerk Diane Cathcart, Engineering/Public Works Director Katie Koester, Juneau Douglas City Museum (JDCM) Director Beth Weigel, JDCM Curator Niko Sanguinetti Finance Director Jeff Rogers, Deputy Parks and Recreation Director Michele Elfers, Community Development Director Jill Maclean, CDD Planning Manager Alix Pierce

**IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The agenda was approved as presented.

**V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A. July 19, 2021 Assembly Committee of the Whole Draft Minutes**

*Hearing no objections, the minutes of the July 19, 2021 meeting were approved by unanimous consent.*

**V. AGENDA TOPICS**

**A. Redistricting Board Presentation**

Mr. Barr introduced TJ Presley, Deputy Director of the Alaska Redistricting Board. Mr. Presley invited boardmember Budd Simpson, currently the only Southeast Member of the Board, to join the presentation. Mr. Simpson shared that the Board is waiting to receive data from the 2020 Census.

Mr. Presley provided a presentation on the history of redistricting in the State of Alaska as well as the current make-up of the Redistricting Board, the population statistics that they are tracking, and the anticipation for how the data will affect the upcoming redistricting. During the presentation, Mr. Presley highlighted the 2010-2019 population decreases show the lowest population growth since 1950, when the data was initially beginning to be tracked.

Mr. Presley noted that there was a lot of uncertainty of the data at the moment. He said that the Census data is expected to arrive on August 12 at 9:00a.m. Alaska time. Originally, the Census

indicated that results and data would not be made available until September 30, which resulted in a number of lawsuits from several states against the Census as a result. Due to this, the Census reported that data will be made available in August. Mr. Presley explained that the Alaska State Constitution sets out specific timeframes for the Redistricting Board developing its plan within 30 days of receiving the Census data. In the last redistricting, The Board originally introduced five draft plans; 60 days after that period, the final plan has to be adopted. There is a 30 day litigation deadline that falls after adoption of the plan.

Mr. Presley then gave an overview which compared the typical timeframe against the late-August 2021 timing. June 1, 2022 is the legislative candidate filing deadline and that puts a crunch on the timeline if any litigation is filed. There are maps from the last redistricting. He said it was likely that the Board will use the same format of maps that were used in the 2010 Redistricting, which are listed on the Alaska Redistricting Board website as 2013 maps due to litigation.

Mr. Bryson asked Mr. Presley to explain if a decrease in population would have any potential impact on redistricting lines in Southeast Alaska. Mr. Presley explained that the State Constitution requires for all districts to be compact, contiguous, and maintain socioeconomic relevance. He said it is fair to assume that district lines may change if there was significant loss of population. The Redistricting Board is no longer required to file for pre-clearance with DOJ, but Mr. Presley added that they are still cognizant and considering the Voting Rights Act.

Mr. Jones asked if how much the district number is allowed to fluctuate. Mr. Presley explained that the US Federal Government allows for 10% deviation. Technology has become more and more capable of producing very precise maps. In 2010, they were able to keep all the districts within the 10% variance, with only one district exception.

Mr. Bryson mentioned that Southeast Alaska is experiencing a shrinking population, and lost some of the area in the Senate Seat Q. He added that every time the Assembly votes against development, Southeast Alaska loses population and loses representation in the legislature.

Ms. Triem asked if the Assembly should anticipate any litigation or legal challenges from the Board after the 90 day period. Mr. Presley said that the Board does anticipate challenges and litigation at some point, as that has happened at every instance of redistricting throughout history.

Mr. Jones thanked Mr. Presley for his time and for his presentation.

## **B. ArtWorks Presentation**

Juneau Douglas City Museum Director Beth Weigel and Museum Curator Niko Sanguinetti provided a presentation about the ArtWorks Grant Program.

Ms. Weigel gave some historical context for the Civilian Conservation Corps art projects from the New Deal era of the 1930s. She thanked the JAHF for their administration and coordination of this ArtWorks Program. Ms. Weigel described the Artworks Program as a project that

engaged a significant number of local artists who were impacted by the pandemic to create pieces that benefitted the community and captured the zeitgeist of COVID-19.

The ArtWorks program received an appropriation of \$330,000, which provided relief funding for 135 artists, who in turn produced 167 pieces of physical art, 10 digital media projects, 600 coloring books, 500 masks, 6 art classes that served 120 participants, and 5 livestreamed/recorded performances with viewership numbers in the thousands.

Ms. Weigel and Ms. Sanguinetti went through each of the slides with Ms. Sanguinetti providing in depth descriptions for each of the pieces featured in the presentation. Ms. Weigel explained that a number of the pieces of art are in the permanent collection now at JDCM, while other pieces are being displayed at different CBJ facilities and around the community. Some ArtWorks projects are still available to view on the JAHc website.

Ms. Gladziszewski asked if there will be a total compilation of all of the ArtWorks art pieces and their physical locations, and suggested compiling all the pieces together in a book format. Ms. Weigel said that JAHc interactive table has the current list, and JDCM has a spreadsheet that logs the locations of physical artwork. Non-physical items (films, performances, etc.) will be determined on a case-by-case basis on how to feature and access it.

Ms. Weldon asked if the City intends to keep all the pieces, or would they consider auctioning off the pieces in the future. Ms. Weigel explained that the art that have been donated to the JDCM permanent collection will remain in-house indefinitely. In regards to the art that is being displayed at other departments, they are responsible for caring and maintaining their pieces, and they would need to go through proper CBJ protocols if they wanted to dispose of the art.

Ms. Hale asked if JDCM had given this presentation to other groups in Juneau, and commented on the high quality and variety of the artwork presented. Ms. Weigel shared that they initially gave a presentation to the Pioneers of Alaska, then later presented at a PWFC meeting prior to tonight's COW meeting.

Ms. Hale liked Ms. Gladziszewski's suggestion of a book, and added that this presentation is a great documentation of the program, and felt that it nicely tied to the historical context of the current era.

Ms. Gladziszewski echoed that she believed this program's pieces were amazing, and said that it would be great to show this off to more people.

Mr. Jones thanked Ms. Weigel and Ms. Sanguinetti for their presentation, and suggested Mr. Barr connect with the new Library Director and Ms. Weigel to find a way to showcase this more.

*The Committee of the Whole took a break at 7:03p.m. The meeting resumed at 7:18p.m.*

### **C. Vote By Mail – Juneau Election Center Update**

Mr. Jones noted that Ms. Hughes-Skandijs had to leave the meeting during the break.

Ms. Koester provided a recap of the Vote By Mail project, reminding the Assembly of their decision to move forward with the C2 option as presented to the Assembly Committee of the Whole meeting of March 15, 2021. This option includes the implementation of a Juneau Election Center with the necessary equipment for residents to vote in person with strong Vote by Mail features. Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen reported that manually sorting the ballots by hand may result in security issues, the potential for human error, and high staff demand. The C2 option prioritizes a purpose built facility secure enough to permanently house voting equipment.

Ms. Koester reported that she and Ms. McEwen decided on the Thane Warehouse, a relatively empty space currently used for emergency equipment storage for Juneau School District and Building Maintenance. She explained that a significant amount of funds will be put towards the various security features needed for the facility: security cameras, secure entrances, secure walls, etc.

Mr. Bryson asked if the building and the equipment required either single phase or three phase electrical needs, as that would need to be addressed before purchasing equipment. Ms. Koester said she did not know if it is single or three phase power, but when staff looked at the facility, they did confirm that the facility did have the electrical capacity for the equipment.

Ms. Gladziszewski asked Ms. McEwen to clarification on the vote by mail aspect of elections through Option C2. Ms. McEwen explained that the Assembly selected Option C2 at the March 15 COW meeting, and directed her to review how a by-mail election would be conducted through Option C2. Ms. Gladziszewski asked if the Assembly had discussed the financial difference between sending all registered voters a Vote by Mail application to receive a ballot, versus sending all voters a full ballot. Ms. McEwen explained that it would be more expensive to send VBM ballot applications to all registered voters, and the Assembly did not direct the Clerk's Office to pursue that path at the March 15 COW meeting.

Mayor Weldon for a cost comparison between conducting a VBM election through the Municipality of Anchorage's election Center versus using the Thane Warehouse as an election center. Ms. McEwen reported that the 2020 Election conducted through MOA came out to \$132,663.37; continued contracts for future elections would cost approximately \$133,000 in expenses, and staffing expenses would bring that number to \$166,600. An election conducted through a Juneau Vote Center would cost \$395,000, including equipment installation. The ongoing annual expenses for future elections after purchasing the initial equipment would amount to \$164,000.

Mr. Bryson suggested sending out a one-time Vote by Mail ballot application for Juneau residents to always receive a mail-in ballot, thus addressing security concerns from those critical of by-mail elections. Ms. Hale asked the Assembly to focus on the topic at hand, the remodeling of the Thane Warehouse.

Mr. Smith questioned the need for a Juneau Vote Center, saying that not everyone would be receiving a vote by mail ballot. Ms. McEwen explained that when an election is being held

primarily by-mail, it involves tracing, signature verification, and security scanning, all of which take place within an Election Center with voting equipment. She spoke to the process of an election conducted through vote by mail, and the measures put in place to verify voter identify and ensure security.

Ms. Triem said that Ms. Hughes-Skandijs had asked her to share that she was in support of this. Ms. Triem asked if the Thane Warehouse had enough available space to allow for the public to safely observe the ballot process. Ms. McEwen said that the Warehouse has some public space and security cameras available for the public to observe, although the capacity is much smaller than the MOA Election Center.

Ms. Gladziszewski spoke in support of this, and said that she would like to discuss sending an application versus sending a ballot in the future.

Mayor Weldon asked if purchasing this equipment would allow for election results to arrive faster, and asked for the average lifespan of this election equipment. Ms. McEwen clarified that the timing of processing election results would be the same due to the statutory Signature Cure Process timeframe. However, the preliminary results of the election might be received quicker, but the final certified election results will not. She added that the equipment has lasted for about four years in Anchorage.

Ms. Hale asked if the Assembly were to go through any other facility, the City would still need to purchase the same equipment. Ms. McEwen confirmed that was the case.

Ms. Hale asked Mc. McEwen to clarify how much time the Assembly has to decide on a voting process with the necessary equipment, ballot applications versus VBM ballots. Ms. McEwen explained that the Assembly would need to introduce an ordinance at the next Assembly meeting on August 23, with Public Hearing at the September 13 meeting, to be ready for the 2022 Municipal Election.

**MOTION** by Mayor Weldon to direct staff to draft a \$700,000 appropriation ordinance to remodel the Thane Warehouse and to purchase election equipment. *Hearing no objections, the motion passed by unanimous consent.*

## **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

*There being no further business to come before the Assembly, the Committee of the Whole meeting was adjourned at 7:55p.m.*

*Minutes drafted by Administrative Assistant Lacey Davis and respectfully submitted by Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen this 30<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2021.*