ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Meeting Minutes – November 30, 2020

I. ROLL CALL

Mr. Jones called the meeting to order at 6:02p.m.

Assemblymembers Present: Deputy Mayor Loren Jones, Maria Gladziszewski, Wade Bryson, Michelle Hale, Alicia Hughes-Skandijs, Greg Smith, Christine Woll, and Mayor Weldon.

Assemblymembers Absent: Carole Triem.

Bartlett Regional Hospital Board Members Present: President Lance Stevens, Rosemary Hagevig, Kenny Solomon-Gross, Brenda Knapp, Mark Johnson, Chuck Bill, Marshal Kendziorek, Deborah Johnston, Iola Young, Dr. Lindy Jones, and Dr. Joy Neyhart.

Juneau School Board Members Present: President Ebett Siddon, Kevin Allen, Paul Kelly, Brian Holst, Deedie Sorenson, Emil Mackey, Martin Stepetin.

Staff Present: City Manager Rorie Watt, Deputy City Manager Mila Cosgrove, City Attorney Robert Palmer, Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen, Deputy Clerk Diane Cathcart, JSD Superintendent Bridget Weiss, BRH staff members CEO Chuck Bill, CFO Kevin Benson, Chief Behavioral Health Officer Bradley Grigg, and Anita Moffit

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Hearing no objections, the agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. May 4, 2020 Assembly Committee of the Whole Draft Minutes
B. November 9, 2020 Assembly Committee of the Whole Draft Minutes

MOTION by Ms. Hale for the Assembly to approve May 4, 2020 and November 9, 2020 Committee of the Whole Minutes and asked for unanimous consent. *Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved by unanimous consent.*

IV. AGENDA TOPICS

A. Bartlett Regional Hospital Board – Joint Session with Assembly (One hour)

BRH President Lance Stevens shared the main three agenda items that the Hospital Board wished to discuss included:

- CEO Search/Desired Attributes
- Partnership/Affiliation Process
- Role of BRH in Public Health

CEO Search/Desired Attributes
Lance Stevens asked Kenny Solomon Gross, Chair of the CEO Recruitment Committee to provide a report. Mr. Solomon-Gross thanked the Assembly for their support in this process, and shared that the Hospital Board has created an extensive recruitment process for the new CEO. He explained that the Hospital Board has formed an ad-hoc committee to help determine the criteria and qualifications of the CEO. The committee consists of:

- Kenny Solomon-Gross, Chair and BRH Board member
- Rosemary Hagevig, BRH Board member
- Mark Johnson, BRH Board member
- Wayne Stevens, United Way Executive Director
- Mila Cosgrove, CBJ Deputy Manager
- Max Mertz, Financial Advisor
- Dr. Bob Urata, Retiree/Former BRH Board member
  [Dr. Urata was added to the ad-hoc committee earlier that day.]

Mr. Solomon-Gross said that once a candidate has been selected, they will ask for input from stakeholders and medical staff.

Ms. Gladziszewski asked how the Hospital Board decided who would serve on this ad-hoc committee.

Mr. Stevens explained that the committee selection was made based on Board Members and community members who expressed interest to participate in the committee. They also wanted to have someone from the City to diversify the committee. Mr. Stevens said that they presented their list at the Hospital Board meeting last Tuesday, which was ratified at that meeting. Dr. Urata was added to the committee today so that they could round out the committee with a representative of the medical field.

Mr. Jones asked if the recruitment committee meeting this upcoming Wednesday would be open to the public. Mr. Hargrave said that the meetings will be open to the public, however there will be some executive sessions for the committee to discuss specifics of the recruitment process.

Mr. Jones mentioned that he could not find any mention of BRH as a government-owned hospital, or the community health functions, or of any strategic goals on the BRH website. He said that if a CEO candidate wanted to find those documents, they are currently very difficult to find on the BRH website. Mr. Jones said the committee needs to share the regulatory environment at BRH as a stand-alone, government owned hospital, which is much different than a non-profit or for-profit hospital.

Mr. Solomon-Gross responded that there is in-depth information about BRH provided in the recruitment announcement. He said that the committee wanted to receive input from the Assembly before sending out the recruitment announcement.

Ms. Gladziszewski asked if they have included any nursing staff or anyone with nursing experience on the recruitment committee. Mr. Stevens said that there is not any BRH staff member on the recruitment committee, however staff will have an opportunity to provide input at a later point in the recruitment process.

Mr. Bryson asked if the current CEO, Chuck Bill, has any recommendations on the types of candidates the committee should be looking for regarding the position. Mr. Stevens explained that Mr. Bill's input was limited to any senior staff who may fill in or wish to apply for the position.

Partnership/Affiliation Process

Mr. Stevens said there are two different paths regarding this process: one being an internal track through the Board and the Planning Committee, and the other has been assigned to CEO Chuck Bill to reach out to potentially interested affiliates.

Mr. Bill shared that he is working through the process of identifying a potential partner who could help BRH expand services to the community and stabilize the outlook for the future. They have gone through a detailed process with ECR consultants. He is in the process of contacting multiple potential candidates, and determining the interest from those candidates. They held a meeting last Wednesday to explore ideas on what would make for an ideal partnership, and decided that they are looking for a partner to assist them in increasing access and special services, medical staff peer reviews, and IT support. He said that he will be doing some homework to explore these details further to pass along to his successor. Mr. Bill said it will be important to give the incoming CEO all of the information, and they can work with the Board on how best to move forward.

Mr. Bill said that he shared with the Board that he would be willing to stay on in a consulting role after leaving to assist them with this process. He expressed his gratitude to the Assembly and CBJ Leadership for their comradery and support for the past six years for him at BRH.

Mayor Weldon thanked Mr. Bill for his work for the community.

Mayor Weldon recommended the Assembly and BRH potentially consider forming a joint consideration body for communication between the two bodies and it would not be a decision making body. She said she would be willing to serve on the joint body, and she suggested that the group could meet quarterly or every other month.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs said she would be supportive of that idea. She believed this is a very consequential topic and will take a while to decide upon. She would like to have a clear idea of where they are in this process, and expressed interest in serving on such a body.

Mr. Kendziorek said that most of the work has been taken on by the Planning Committee which he chairs. He also said that they have received good input from staff on what improvements they wish to see. Mr. Kendziorek advised the Assembly to be cautious about the RFP process, which has to go through CBJ procurement procedures, and said that they need to be careful not to be biased towards potential vendors. They have a Planning Committee meeting on December 17 at 7:00am to discuss this subject, and he invited any interested Assemblymembers to join.

Mayor Weldon explained that the steering committee would only be a conduit for sharing communication, and would not be involved with the RFP process. She shared that her intent with this committee was to allow for perspectives to be shared between BRH and the Assembly.

Mr. Solomon-Gross agreed with the notion of bringing together BRH and the Assembly to ensure that these two bodies are both on the same page. In regards to the CEO search, he said that they want to make sure that this process is as transparent as possible. He would be in support of monthly or quarterly meetings between the two entities, and described it as a potential benefit for the community as a whole.

Ms. Hale appreciated this idea, and suggested that this committee may be a good fit for Ms. Woll to participate in, if she were to express interest.

Mr. Stevens said that he thought this committee would be a good idea. He said that this is a critical long term decision making process which will have impact long after they are done serving in their current positions. He shared that he was looking forward to open communication channels between BRH and the Assembly.

Ms. Hagevig said that Mr. Kendziorek has been leading the Planning Committee for this, and they have been doing a thorough and extensive job. She asked if the Assembly was considering creating a separate committee, or expanding the work of the current planning committee with the inclusion of Assemblymembers.

Mayor Weldon explained that her concept for the group would be a separate committee, as they would be working on different projects. She added that she was looking for a committee that would act as a communication chain between the two bodies.

Ms. Knapp spoke in favor of keeping the committees separate, as the Planning Committee is a standing committee of BRH and has other responsibilities.

Mr. Johnson noted that the CEO recruitment committee also had input into that process as well.

MOTION by Ms. Gladziszewski for the Assembly to form a steering committee made up of three members for the Bartlett Regional Hospital board and three members of the Assembly to discuss, monitor, and steer the partnership consideration process. *Hearing no objections, the committee was formed by unanimous consent.*

Mayor Weldon said she would get with Mr. Stevens to determine the specific role and make-up of the committee membership.

The Role of BRH in Public Health

Mr. Stevens asked the Assembly to clarify what specific items they wanted to discuss, as the role of BRH in Public Health can be a vague topic. Mayor Weldon clarified that the Assembly would be interested in hearing about how BRH is addressing mental health and addiction in the community.

Mr. Stevens shared that BRH takes their role in addiction and mental health issues very seriously, and he believes that BRH has spent the past several years moving in the right direction towards addressing these issues in the community. He mentioned that Mr. Bradley Grigg, Chief Behavioral Health Officer at BRH was present at this meeting.

Ms. Gladziszewski mentioned that BRH is a community hospital and owned by the CBJ, yet she said it sometimes feels as that BRH acts like a standalone private hospital rather than a community hospital.

Mr. Grigg expressed gratitude to have been under Mr. Bill's leadership for the last four years. He shared that BRH has focused on making advancements on how they treat mental health, particularly during the pandemic. They were able to transition into telehealth due to COVID-19, and converted Rainforest into providing outpatient services. He discussed the setup of an outpatient program while still being able to socially distant, and how that led to the further development of the telehealth program. Rainforest opened in October at 50% capacity, which resulted in their outpatient program now serving over 40 patients.

Bartlett's Outpatient Psychiatric Clinic was serving 13 patients in July, and as of today they are now serving 550 patients entirely via telehealth. Mr. Grigg shared that telehealth has allowed them to expand their ability to serve more patients and these advancements have increased patient engagement and no-show rates have decreased.

The state continues to invest in the expansion projects at BRH, which Mr. Grigg described as a sign of how much trust the state has in Bartlett's progress. Bartlett Regional Hospital currently has $4.5M budgeted in state operational grants in this fiscal year alone. He said that through the State, DHSS, the Rasmussen Foundation, and Premera Blue Cross/Blue Shield, they have fundraised over 45% of the cost of the new Crisis Stabilization Program. Premera committed $1M in grants to go toward that project, which is 10% of the total cost. Mr. Grigg said that he is grateful for the work that has been done, and the opportunity they have been given to set an example on how to best utilize telehealth services.

Mayor Weldon congratulated Mr. Grigg on the accomplishments made by BRH Mental Health Services.

Ms. Hale said that she did not want to talk about mental health, she wanted to discuss the relationship between BRH and the community.

Ms. Hagevig commented that Mr. Grigg did not adequately inform the Assembly about his success in establishing the Crisis Stabilization Program, which she described as a cutting-edge program that is leading the state in terms of mental health. She congratulated Mr. Grigg on his success with this program.

Mr. Johnson said that there are a number of things BRH has done in regards to Public Health. He mentioned BRH providing education to the community through programs and events. He also would be open with BRH sharing relevant information with the community on issues that are trending or becoming a community concern.

Mayor Weldon said that it was great that BRH has so many telehealth options available, and asked what happens when a patient does not have access to telehealth. Mr. Grigg said that the Emergency Department and Clinic has in-person options for support services.

Ms. Hale mentioned that working with non-profits relative to public health with the community was one of the goals of the Assembly. She explained that part of the goal there was to broaden their focus on the community. She commented that CBJ does not have a health department, and said that BRH could potentially play that role in theory. She said that during the beginning of the pandemic, it was a difficult and slow process to get BRH engaged in standing up testing. She said that while Bartlett is engaged now, she feels that was a process that took too long to connect. Ms. Hale spoke in favor of having the Assembly work closely with Bartlett to tighten the bond between CBJ and BRH.

Mr. Stevens disagreed with Ms. Hale's statement, saying that the pandemic has been going on for less than seven months, and the fact that they will have a testing machine up and running by January is a fast process. He shared that there were a lot of unknowns in the beginning, and he disagreed with the notion that they were too slow. Mr. Stevens said that they have a financial responsibility to approach this process cautiously, and they take their role in public health very seriously as a community hospital.

Mr. Smith asked if they felt that BRH addressed their role in Public Health to the fullest extent in regards to COVID-19. He also asked how the Assembly could help Bartlett play a role in Public Health.

Mr. Stevens said that the first and foremost role of BRH is to keep the hospital financially viable for the community. He said that reason is why they started to consider a partnership agreement, to see what they can do to meet the community's needs. Mr. Stevens explained that if BRH is going to be tasked with traditional public health services, then the Assembly must understand that is a large expense that the hospital cannot cover alone.

Mr. Johnson commented that he felt the pandemic has reminded everyone that we are in all of this together. He said that BRH could work closely with community partners to help prevent the spread of the pandemic, in an effort to avoid overwhelming the hospital.

Mayor Weldon reminded the Board and the Assembly that they were running out of time. She shared that she was interested to learn what the role of BRH will look like in the future, and agreed with Mr. Steven's comment that they would need to financially support the hospital if they asked BRH to expand their role. She thanked everyone for coming and participating in this meeting.

Mr. Stevens thanked the Assembly for everything they are doing. He said that they should consider expanding this conversation regarding public health, so that the Hospital Board could address the expectations set by the Assembly.

Ms. Hale said that everyone at Bartlett Regional Hospital has done an incredible job in addressing COVID-19, and thanked them for their efforts.

Mayor Weldon adjourned the Joint Assembly/BRH portion of the meeting at 7:10p.m. The Assembly took a break at 7:10p.m. The meeting resumed at 7:20p.m.

B. Juneau School Board-Joint Session with Assembly
Mayor Weldon invited School Board President Ebett Siddon to lead the discussion during this portion of the meeting. Ms. Siddon invited all of the School Board members to introduce themselves to the Assembly, and the Assemblymembers introduced themselves to the School Board.

JSD/Assembly Topics for Discussion:

- Smart Start
- Enrollment/Budget Update
- Facilities Update
- Strategic Plan
- Social Justice/Anti-Racism

Smart Start – Ebett Siddon
Ms. Siddon shared that the ability for Juneau School District to offer in-person learning opportunities is closely linked to the COVID-19 status in the community. She mentioned that JSD has offered in-person opportunities since August, which include: special education, internet support sites, kinder ready, pre-K, high school courses that require in-person instruction such as woodwork, CT lab work and band classes. The School District is currently preparing to start Phase 2 of Smart Start on January 11. She said that JSD has also consider what they can offer after the pandemic to assist students who may have fallen behind, such as catch-up work that could help support students in the summer and in the fall.

Ms. Siddon reported that meals have been offered to all children in Juneau, JSD has deliver 65,000 breakfasts and lunches over 100 school days of the school year so far. They are delivering meals to approximately 100 households. She also said that JSD teachers signed their contracts in May, and three teachers were relocated from brick and mortar schools to the Homebridge program. She mentioned that CBJ subsidized the opportunity for RALLY childcare any school-aged children, and reported that 34 children are currently using those services. The estimated contribution will be lower than anticipated due to lower enrollment. She also shared that JSD has applied for grant funds for mental wellness to address the emotional needs of their students.

Transportation Update – Martin Stepetin

Mr. Stepetin shared that JSD will be looking for more staff to deliver meals in January, as more staff shift to in-person services. Transportation busses are currently being used to deliver meals. The bus routes stay the same, there has not been any reduction in the use of First Student buses just a shifting of duties. He said that JSD are currently using First Student to distribute meals, and to transport special education students to and from school. He said it is too early to tell if they will have any savings in transportation, due to the loss of enrollment decreasing transportation funds. The reduction of students doesn't hold harmless the resulting reduction in transportation funding.

Facilities Update – Paul Kelly

Mr. Kelly reported that the School Board has two CIP lists. The Small CIP List features projects to be funded by the $1M sales tax revenues. There are currently 22 projects on that list, however some will not be addressed until after 2025. The Big CIP list features projects that have been submitted to the Department of Education, which are developed through grant funding. These seven projects include five roof replacements and two major renovations, and total approximately $63M. The recent Municipal Bond Initiative approved bond funds should be able to address three of the items on the big CIP List. Mr. Kelly thanked the Assembly and Juneau voters for their support in funding these projects.

CARES Act Funds Update – Brian Holst

Mr. Holst thanked the Assembly for their support and funding for Juneau Schools. He shared that CBJ contributed CARES Act Funding with JSD which is set to expire in December 2020, and also mentioned that the JSD received additional CARES Act Funding that will expire in 2022. He also discussed JSD's updated strategic plan for the next five years. This plan includes a broader community initiative: the Juneau Education Compact, which focuses on preparing Juneau students from "cradle to career." The Juneau Education Compact has ten objectives that begin from the earliest years with kindergarten readiness, through university, when students transition from high school into their careers. Mr. Holst said that he would be willing to answer any questions the Assembly had, and shared that they are looking for Assembly and community support for this initiative.

Strategic Plan – Emil Mackey

Mr. Mackey shared that creating the JSD Strategic Plan was the focus of the board's work last year. This year, the Strategic Plan contains four pillars: Achievement, Equity, Relationship, and Partnerships. These pillars, while separate, are integrated through policy. For example, Mr. Mackey mentioned that one of the goals featured in the "Equity" pillar includes collaborating with community partners to foster the revitalization of the Tlingit language. He explained that this process will involve revisiting how to provide instruction with cultural awareness and effectiveness. He thanked Superintendent Weiss for her efforts in taking various scattered ideas and arguments and wordsmithing them together to create a cohesive document that reflected how JSD will approach education through 2025.

Enrollment/Budget Update – Deedie Sorensen
Ms. Sorenson shared that last year the School Board projected a slightly lower enrollment than the 2019-2020 School Year. There is a substantially lower enrollment for the 2020-2021 School Year. The Department of Education has a provision called a "hold harmless" provision that helps out when a school suffers a significant loss of enrollment. This year, JSD has lost approximately 900 students; however, they also had more than 400 students transition from brick/mortar schools to Homebridge homeschooling. Due to that shift and the "hold harmless" clause, JSD actually did not lose funding from the Department of Education after all. Ms. Sorenson expressed gratitude for the Assembly's commitment to the JSD, and thanked the current Assembly and the past Assembly for their generous support over the years.

Social Justice/Anti-Racism – Kevin Allen
Mr. Allen shared JSD's equity statement, which states, "Ensure equity, access, and success for every student through prioritization, support structures, high quality instruction, and resources." Mr. Allen explained that all JSD staff have been required to undergo equity training throughout the fall. He also mentioned that JSD held a School Board retreat at which they spent a number of hours going through equity training. At a recent Alaska Association of School Boards Conference, JSD introduced a resolution to produce an Alaska History textbook to be coauthored by both Indigenous and Western scholars. He said that JSD currently has a good system in place to report equity work, and have equity teams established at every school in the district that provides annual reports to the School Board. JSD will continue to review and update their policies.
Mr. Allen reflected on the diverse population within their district, and emphasized how important it is for the School Board to understand how to address the needs in the district. He thanked the Assembly with breaking ground with the Systematic Racism Review Committee. Though JSD does not have a similar committee, he said that they have many processes in place to ensure equity and social justice.

Ms. Siddon thanked the School Board members for sharing their presentations, and opened the floor to take questions from the Assembly.

Ms. Gladziszewski asked for details on the reopening process for the school district.
Ms. Siddon said that the Smart Start plan was developed over the course of six meetings by a group of sixty JSD staff members and teachers. The School Board was invited to those staff meetings to hear those conversations. Superintendent Weiss considered the recommendations made and the current health status of the community, and developed a proposed Smart Start phase. Mr. Mackey mentioned that their suggestions heavily rely on the recommendations made by the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Smith asked if the School Board has made any decisions on the next steps they will take after the assessment phase on the equity and racial justice issues. Mr. Allen said that he was not sure what Mr. Smith meant by assessment phase. He mentioned that the work that JSD has been doing involves equity reports from each school. Ms. Siddon clarified that JSD entered an assessment phase by reviewing their district policies and seeing what areas may need some work to bolster equity, such as hiring practices, and then making those adjustments when necessary.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs asked if the School Board had received any feedback from JSD staff regarding reopening. She recalled there was some push back between the staff and unions, and asked if someone could speak to that. Ms. Siddon mentioned that it is a balance of knowing when to get involved, and when to let the Superintendent lead the district, and trust those decisions. She said that the School Board was present at each of the meetings where JSD staff and teachers discussed and debated their concerns with reopening. Ms. Siddon clarified that the conversations at those meetings were not if they should reopen, but how to reopen in a way that would best meet the needs of students.

Mr. Mackey shared that he has been the School Board member who pushed back the most, saying that he disagreed with some aspects of how they were moving forward. He said that even though he had his disagreements, he believes that Dr. Weiss is working diligently and effectively towards the bigger picture, and said he fully supported her decisions.

Mr. Stepetin said that Juneau has managed to avoid spreading COVID within our school district, and feels that Dr. Weiss is managing this very well. He mentioned that kinder ready has been operating in-person, and said they have done an incredible job in adding pieces throughout the semester.

Ms. Woll mentioned that the Assembly recently met to set their goals for the year, asked what the JSD goals and priorities looked like for this year. Mr. Holst referenced the JSD strategic plan, and shared that one of their objectives for this year was for better reading by 3rd grade. He explained the reasoning behind this objective was to encourage earlier reading comprehension, which he said would help students be successful in the long term. Unfortunately, this plan was postponed due to the pandemic, and they will continue to try to address this objective.

Mr. Bryson appreciated JSD taking time to address the mental health of their students during this time and as they return to school. He asked for clarification on the following questions: who is paying for food services, how long they expect that funding to last, how long they can continue to provide meals to students, and the environmental impact of using buses to deliver meals. Ms. Siddon explained that meals are being primarily paid through federal funding, which will last through the end of the school year. Mr. Mackey said that JSD has a contract with First Student, and not utilizing the buses could result in liability issues that they want to avoid. Mr. Kelly said that keeping bus drivers employed by delivering food will make it easier to transition to bussing to in-person classes in January.

Mayor Weldon mentioned that there has been changes in the School Facilities and Maintenance joint committee meeting members. She said it would be good to schedule a joint facilities committee sometime in January.

Mr. Jones expressed interest in Ms. Sorenson's overview of the budget, noting that the final answers generally comes from Department of Education in January. Ms. Sorenson responded that the overview will not be finalized until the beginning of February. She mentioned that JSD greatly benefitted from the number of students that moved to Homebridge rather than some other homeschooling program. She said she feels fairly confident that the numbers will not change significantly.

Mr. Jones recalled that the Joint Education Committee of the Legislature met, and indicated that they were unsure if the "hold harmless" program was going to remain as it was. He asked if the JSD followed these discussions, and if they are confident that the legislature committee will continue to fund the hold harmless clause as written. Ms. Sorenson said that JSD was able to maintain their numbers due to the large amount of students who transferred to their homeschooling program, which she said gives her hope that things will work out for JSD in the future.

Mayor Weldon asked how many students are participating in online classrooms and to clarify the drop in enrollment. Ms. Sorenson reported that JSD lost 900 students, 400 went to JSD Homebridge, and the bulk of the remaining 500 transferred to other online schools outside of Juneau School District.
Mr. Stepetin spoke to the increasing discussion on how to bolster and support the Homebridge program up against the competing alternative homeschooling options, and interested in seeing how JSD will continue to develop their distance learning programs.

Ms. Siddon thanked the Assembly for meeting with the School Board, and encouraged them to reach out to her or any of the School Board members with any questions at any time.

Mayor Weldon thanked the School Board and Superintendent Weiss for all of their work during this past year.

V. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the Assembly, Deputy Mayor Jones adjourned the meeting at 8:42p.m.

Minutes drafted by Administrative Assistant Lacey Davis and respectfully submitted by Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen this 1st day of February, 2021.