

**ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU, ALASKA
MINUTES**

December 8, 2014, 6:00 PM.
City Hall Assembly Chambers

Worksession - No public testimony

I. ROLL CALL

Deputy Mayor Mary Becker called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Assembly Chambers.

Assemblymembers Present: Mary Becker, Karen Crane, Loren Jones, Jesse Kiehl, Maria Gladyszewski (teleconference), Jerry Nankervis, Merrill Sanford, Kate Troll and Debbie White.

Assemblymembers Absent: None

Staff present: Kim Kiefer, City Manager; Amy Mead, City Attorney, Rob Steedle, Deputy City Manager; Laurie Sica, Municipal Clerk; Kirk Duncan, Public Works Director.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Kiefer said Mr. Ian Grant had contacted the clerk to let the Assembly know he was unable to attend the meeting, but would be available by email or phone to answer any questions. Hearing no objection, the agenda was approved.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. October 27, 2014 Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Hearing no objections, the minutes of the October 27, 2014 Committee of the Whole meeting were approved.

IV. AGENDA TOPICS

A. Alaska Small Business Development Center-Juneau Update

Mr. Grant was unable to be present and he sent his apologies for the late notice. Mayor Sanford said that Mr. Grant provided a presentation quarterly to the Mayor with a written report and he had been trying to get an opportunity for the rest of the Assembly to see what was happening and ask any questions. There would be another opportunity to hear from him during the budget planning sessions, and Mr. Grant was available to meet with the Assemblymembers at their convenience and answer questions.

B. Gastineau Apartment Direction

Ms. Mead said that the staff would like to get information from the Assembly in order to draft a Memorandum of Agreement with the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) which defined the parameters for the use(s) of the building. There needed to be a public use for an eminent domain taking, and AHFC would like specifics for marketability, such as affordable housing, commercial space, parking, and any direction on Pocket Park. This MOA would allow AHFC to do due diligence before it proceeded with any agreement. It would require an engineer's inspection from AHFC. This information would ultimately be provided to the court in any taking of the building.

Ms. Troll suggested affordable housing, general commercial, and some way to address parking would be a benefit, but not essential, and if Pocket Park became part of the equation, that might be doable. She supported giving flexibility to the AHFC.

Ms. Crane agreed and said that it was a great location for senior housing and would like to see those needs be addressed. Ms. Mead said there was some interest from private developers regarding senior housing and they had requested the appraisal. If that is a serious interest eminent domain would likely not be pursued.

Ms. Becker asked about timelines. Ms. Mead said she anticipated an answer from AHFC by the end of January, then CBJ could begin eminent domain proceedings at the end of January / beginning of February. A quick take process would allow early work and transfer of title. The other process or route for action was the nuisance action which would take quite a bit longer. There was some hope for being able to take advantage of the upcoming construction season.

Ms. Gladziszewski asked to advocate for broad, general language to not preclude any ideas.

Mr. Kiehl agreed with Ms. Gladziszewski. He asked if there was a sale to a private developer, would the staff come back to the Assembly before taking action. Ms. Mead said Mr. Barrett would like to sell the property to CBJ. He intended to get a second appraisal. He was told CBJ would not hold up its process for that. Private developers are seeking the appraisal and contacting CDD, and if they are interested, they need to purchase directly from Mr. Barrett, or take another action that would leave them with fewer restrictions. Ms. Mead said that if a private sale occurred she would provide information to the Assembly and not proceed with eminent domain.

Ms. Troll asked if Ms. Mead had talked to Mr. Barrett. Ms. Mead said yes, he was aware of CBJ being open to purchasing the property, and had been very cooperative.

Ms. Mead said she had enough information to move forward.

C. Capital Transit Plan Update

Mr. Steedle said this would not be the last time this matter would be before the Assembly. The process began in April 2013 with a ridership survey, a UAS survey, public meetings in June, and they started a comprehensive operations analysis of the system and identified issues with the current service. On time performance was the biggest issue. That was the first issue to address. Another issue was under utilized express service and not using resources wisely. Also, extending service to under or un-served areas, with the most interest in Riverside, followed by Lemon Creek industrial area. We have come up with a number of plans since that time and it was important to know that the transit development plan was conceptual, though detailed, and could not be implemented as the Assembly was not committing to funding the plan. It required \$200,000 in addition to current funding. Even so, the times were not correct in the plan. We will not point fingers, but the basic facts were not correct. We have since worked to ensure we have accurate times and to understand the drivers' concerns much better. Drivers' desires are sometimes in conflict with riders' concerns, including left turns, downtown loop, snow and St. Ann's routes. They had come up with a modified plan that would partially address the concerns about Nugget Mall as a transfer station, which he outlined. The comments heard the most were concerns about service into the UAS campus. Maintaining this service will require tradeoffs. Mr. Steedle said the staff was not ready to make a recommendation as Mr. Duncan and Mr. Steedle were not yet in agreement.

Mr. Duncan spoke about the goals and said the plan meets those goals. Seven public meetings were held at different times in different areas of the community, with about 200 participants. Dowl HKM compiled the comments. He reviewed the book of comments provided to the Assembly, and how the information was laid out. The comments were summarized and categorized in a table, and the entire comments were also provided as back up. There were concerns about censoring of comments so we wanted to categorize and tabulate comments, but all of the individual comments were included. He said the comments were treated with respect. They handed out information on the buses, had overhead signs in the buses, and the media ran several pieces on the topic. There was already park and ride going on coming from UAS and Nugget Mall, which was surprising. People were passionate about keeping Nugget Mall, UAS and downtown service, and the overall feeling was that it was better

to keep the service the way it was now than go with the proposed changes. People don't like the plan. The only thing we haven't changed is 30 minute headways. The consultants were clear about keeping to 30 minutes - to keep it less confusing to the riders. He proposed looking at extended headways with the drivers. He thought the plan was good, but it had received many negative comments. If we move on the plan, we need to start planning at pipeline skate park. The Assembly did not need to take action and had time to review the comments, which were very well compiled by DOWL HKM.

Ms. Crane said she was not willing to throw in the towel and not make any changes but she did not feel we were there yet. Some public did not understand the plan, and some had some legitimate concerns. She supported putting some money back into the system. It was good to go back to the drivers.

Mr. Steedle said increasing headways longer than 30 minutes is a reduction in service and he thought the ridership would be very unhappy with that. Perhaps more funds could be added to the situation, but it was a zero sum game and we need to move the resources to where they will best fit. There is a lot of information to digest, we will continue to think, and you may want to take this issue up again on December 29 COW. We need to take a look at our goals and have the Assembly state the goals and go back to the drawing board. It was not surprising that the comments were negative. The plan proposed overall was good and was the best we could do with the modifications. There is a lot of misinformation out there. People were very concerned about shifting the transfer station from Nugget Mall to the skate park but they won't be standing at the park, they will be sitting on the bus waiting for the next bus to arrive.

Ms. Crane - what happens when there are inevitable delays due to weather? Mr. Steedle said they would be out in the snow. They were making plans for lighting and shelter. The owner of the mall has said that he really does not want people in the corridor waiting for the bus and may close it if a major retailer comes in.

Ms. Troll said staff was in a tough spot with being asked to do more with less. The scheme included corrected times, and her comments were not a reflection of the staff's commitment to the work. We all need to look for a better solution. The plan states that Nugget Mall will be maintained as a transfer. The skate park does not seem to work as a viable location based on the clients at St. Vincents and the seniors that have come to depend on the station at the mall. She was interested in making this work through additional funds. If a third bus were available we could potentially do different things and she did not know if that was a possibility. She would like to have staff come back with a fiscal note using additional funds. Money was required to make the skate park work, and she would prefer using the funds to making the existing system work.

Mr. Kiehl said he would read the comments. He was nervous about changing the half hour headways and that was one of the things that make the system easy and predictable, which makes any transit system work. He thought the people were done a disservice by cutting routes to Douglas, UAS, downtown, North Douglas and this did not build the access to jobs and recreation needed. He shared the interest in looking at funding to see what could be done. He said it may be time to look at a fare increase. He talked about a potential loop through Jordan Creek Condos and a transfer station at Walmart as possibilities to look at. He spoke about future construction on Glacier Highway and Egan Drive that would slow the system down.

Ms. White said a bigger concern could be when private landowners were in charge of the transfer sites, this could be a problem. We may need to look at pockets of property that the city owns and come up with some type of solution.

Ms. Crane said it was discouraging knowing how much work has gone into this but the work was valuable and needed to be done for years, so it would eventually get to where we need to go. There would be hard decisions to make and they needed to be made with as much public input as possible, with all of the information. She thanked the staff for the work that had been done.

Ms. Troll said change was difficult and we have a ridership that is used to the current routes. She was willing to make tough decisions, but the proposed plan was almost moving backwards and we need to revisit our goals. Maintaining the connection to the university and early service for workers are important goals to maintain. There would have to be a change, and the bus service to St. Anne's is not likely to continue. From an operational standpoint, the transit plan discussed fare boxes and the operational suggestions in the plan still needed to be acted on. She was hopeful progress would be made.

Ms. Becker said that people had learned the current system, and major changes were difficult to manage. She was not sure people would accept changes and she was not very optimistic. The consultants said this is a great system and she didn't want to make changes that were not great. She asked about raising the fare.

Mr. Duncan said that the consultants said that \$2 was about the max. Mr. Duncan was supportive of electronic fare boxes and there was some pass abuse, which the fare boxes could help with. We have money in the bond issue which is creeping its way to the top of the list.

Mr. Jones said he heard that seniors were more willing to lose the tax exemption than the bus service.

Ms. White asked that since there was a large percentage of free riders, would an increase in fares help. Mr. Duncan said that state and federal government mandated eligibility for transportation and it related to caravan service as well. Staff needed to reevaluate 1800 people for their eligibility and the Assembly would hear more about that. Passes could be lifetime passes and to take on pass management would add additional staff time we don't have now.

Ms. Becker thanked the staff for their input.

V. COMMITTEE MEMBER / LIAISON COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Jones reminded the Assembly of the Human Resources Committee meeting for all Assemblymembers on Wednesday, December 10, at 5:30 p.m. to interview applicants for the Planning Commission and the Bartlett Regional Hospital Board.

Mayor Sanford set the date for the next Assembly retreat with goal setting on Wednesday, January 14 at Noon until approximately 4 p.m., with time set for the Assembly photo.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 7 p.m.

Submitted by Laurie Sica, Municipal Clerk