

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

350 East Dahlia Avenue, Palmer, Alaska 99645 - 907-861-8683

Tim Hale, District 1
Stephanie Nowers, District 2
George McKee, District 3
Robert Yundt, District 4
Mokie Tew, District 5
Jesse Sumner, District 6
Tam Boeve, District 7



Thomas Bergey, District 1
Jim Hart, District 2
Ole Larson, District 3
Sarah Welton, District 4
Ryan Ponder, District 5
Dwight Probasco, District 6
Jeff Taylor, District 7

MEETING MINUTES

ASSEMBLY CHAMBERS

350 EAST DAHLIA AVENUE, PALMER

JOINT ASSEMBLY/SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

6:00 PM

TUESDAY, MARCH 23, 2021

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Joint Assembly/School Board Meeting was held on Tuesday, March 24, 2021, at the Borough Assembly Chambers, 350 E. Dahlia Avenue, Palmer, Alaska. The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Mayor Vern Halter.

II. ASSEMBLY ROLL CALL

Present: 7 - Assemblymember Tim Hale (arrived at 6:12 p.m.), Assemblymember Stephanie Nowers, Assemblymember George McKee (arrived at 6:25 p.m.), Assemblymember Robert Yundt, Assemblymember Mokie Tew, Assemblymember Jesse Sumner, and Assemblymember Tam Boeve

SCHOOL BOARD ROLL CALL

PRESENT: School Board Member Thomas Bergey, School Board President Ole Larson, School Board Member Sarah Welton, and School Board Member Dwight Probasco

TELEPHONIC: School Board Member Jim Hart and School Board Member Jeff Taylor (telephonically at 7:36 p.m.)

EXCUSED: School Board Member Ryan Ponder

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented without objection.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was collectively led by students from Houston Junior/Senior High School.

V. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

The following persons spoke to difficulties encountered in sharing space and to the need for Houston Middle School to be rebuilt as soon as possible: Ms. Josie Rentsma, City of Houston Mayor Virgie Thompson, Mr. Adam Ames, Mr. Rick Taylor, Ms. Sherry Rusher, Mr. Jesse Loyer, Ms. Bri Rentsma, and Mr. Robert Hall.

VI. JOINT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

A. Annual Budget and Bonding for Schools (MSB 2.12.075(A))

Dr. Randy Traini, Superintendent; and Ms. Katie Gardner, Associate Superintendent of Human Resources, reported on the School District Budget.

The meeting recessed at 8:05 p.m. and reconvened at 8:19 p.m.

B. Update on Houston Middle School (Requested by School Board)

The Assembly and the School Board discussed possible ways to secure the remaining funding required to begin construction of a new Houston Middle School.

C. Update on Borough Road Construction and Future Road Projects Near Schools (Requested by School Board)

Mr. Terry Dolan, Public Works Director, reported on road construction projects near schools.

VII. MAYOR, ASSEMBLY, SCHOOL BOARD, AND STAFF COMMENTS

School Board Member Hart stated that it is urgent to find the money to rebuild Houston Middle School.

School Board Member Taylor thanked the parents and students who provided testimony. Stated that he would appreciate it if the Assembly and the School Board could come to an agreement to get the school built as soon as possible.

School Board Member Bergey noted his agreement with the previous comments.

School Board Member Welton spoke in appreciation of the discussion that occurred. Spoke to her past personal experience with limited space at a school. Thanked the body for the meeting.

School Board Member Probasco thanked the Houston community for attending and providing testimony. Thanked the Assembly for addressing the school bond debt reimbursement issue. Noted that no decision has been made on how to move forward with rebuilding the school, but that he feels like one is coming soon.

School Board President Larson thanked the body for the meeting. Noted that even though the discussion appeared contentious at times, that he appreciates that it is occurring. Stated that he would like to see the school rebuilt immediately.

Assemblymember Tew spoke in support of rebuilding the school as soon as possible. Noted that he has fond memories of high school. Stated that he understands what memories can mean to kids and their futures.

Assemblymember Hale thanked the body for the meeting. Spoke to his appreciation of the discussion. Opined that when the project goes out to bid, that it will not be impacted by large civil projects that are normally occurring.

Assemblymember Sumner stated that the money the Borough has is tax payer money and not Borough money. Opined that the School District should not be holding a fund balance and not contribute to the rebuilding of the school.

Assemblymember Nowers thanked the body for the meeting. Thanked the public for the testimony provided. Stated that she is hopeful that the Federal Emergency Management Agency funds will arrive soon. Spoke in support of

the school being rebuilt as soon as possible. Opined that safe routes to schools need to be included in road construction projects.

Assemblymember Yundt opined that rebuilding the school should not be a tug-o-war. Noted that all of the elected officials are also taxpayers with children that have gone to school in the Borough. Spoke in support of the school being rebuilt as soon as possible. Noted that whatever agreement is reached, that the current Assembly cannot bind future Assembly funds.

Mayor Halter related that he knew that Houston Middle School would need to be rebuilt after the earthquake as soon as he saw it. Stated that he understands the frustration with delays, but that the rebuild needs to last into the future and that getting it built is the most important thing. Spoke to the process with insurance when Susitna Valley Jr./Sr. High School burned down. Spoke to his concerns with school bond debt reimbursement. Stated that he is hopeful that Governor Dunleavy's budget will include the former 70/30 split that the voters agreed upon. Thanked Dr. Traini and Mr. Brown for their hard work on the school rebuild.

Assemblymember Boeve noted that Houston Middle School is in her district. Thanked the Houston community for their testimony and attendance. Agreed that the school needs to be rebuilt as soon as possible. Noted that even though it has been difficult, that the bodies are moving in the right direction.

Ms. McKechnie advised that the memo in the front of her budget lists all the changes that she is requesting. Noted it is a very simple format and that if anyone has any questions, to please let her know.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

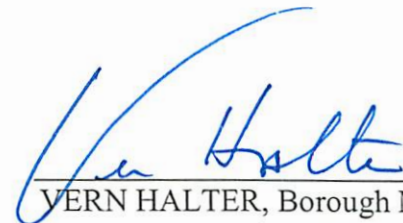


Mayoral Signature and Clerk Attestment


For

March 23, 2021, Joint Assembly/School Board Meeting Minutes

(4 pages)


VERN HALTER, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:


LONNIE R. McKECHNIE, CMC, Borough Clerk

Minutes Approved: 04/21/21