

# GOVERNMENT HILL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

C/O Community Councils Center • 1057 West Fireweed Lane, Suite 100 Anchorage, AK 99503

Stephanie Kessler, President

Melinda Gant, Vice President

Arran Forbes & Brian Fields, Co-Secretaries/Treasurers

Kyle Stevens, FCC Representative

Mavis Hancock & Donna Rymut At-Large Board Members

## GHCC Meeting Minutes

**March 21, 2013**

Submitted by Arran Forbes

### **President Stephanie Kesler Presiding**

**Introductions:** Customary round-the-room introductions

### **February 2013 GHCC Minutes:**

Corrections:

- Steve Ribuffo asked for a clarification regarding the Port of Anchorage expansion: although \$100 million has been lost on the project, the city is not necessarily seeking reimbursement for that amount.

February 2013 GHCC Minutes were approved with the correction.

### **Legislative Updates:**

#### **John Arrono for Assembly member Patrick Flynn was in attendance:**

- AO37—the assembly ordinance pertaining to organized labor in Anchorage—will be voted on March 26. John reports that Patrick has been working to keep public testimony open, and continues to pursue revisions to the ordinance. He is encouraging written testimony in the form of emails to the assembly and letters to the editor.

### **Representative Les Gara called in:**

- Sounding thoroughly dejected, Les stated that the oil tax reform bill passed the Senate on March 20. He provided a brief discussion of the ramifications of this bill on state revenue, including a projected annual loss of \$1 billion to the State. According to representatives from several oil companies he has spoken with, they do not intend to identify new projects or modify existing ones as a result of the tax reform. He expresses frustration over the media reporting of this issue.
- Les encourages the public to remain active participants in the democratic process, and consider initiating a public referendum.

- The senate has also approved an \$8 million cut to mental health grants, and additional cuts to pre-K grants.

#### **FCC Update from Kyle Stevens:**

- Kyle recently attended his first FCC meeting. Discussion items at this meeting included the rehabilitation of segments of the Coastal Trail, the Youth Trail Cleaning Program, and renovations to the municipal library (and funding thereof).
- Scenic Foothills tree removal service is considering making a presentation to the Government Hill Community Council regarding their approach to tree clearing on public land. All in attendance are in favor of the idea.
- The West Anchorage Candidates Forum for the Anchorage Assembly will be held March 28 at the Spenard Recreation Center.

#### **Alaska Railroad Update from Tim Sullivan**

- The Alaska Railroad recently underwent its third set of layoffs in four years, this time eliminating 54 permanent year-round positions. ARR employed 800 employees in 2008, and is now below 600.
- Declines in revenue for the Railroad are largely attributable to waning production of the Flint Hills Refinery as well as Usibelli Coal.
- Federal funding for the Railroad has been reduced from \$36 million to \$27 million.
- The Railroad is currently struggling to comply with an unfunded federal program entitled Positive Train Control, requiring all passenger railroads that share track with freight to update their GIS brake operations. ARR is currently \$90 million short of the funds required to install the new system. The federal deadline is December 2015, but ARR believes it may be extended by the legislature to 2018. Should ARR not raise the funds to meet the new standards, they will be forced to discontinue passenger service.
- Passenger service currently accounts for 18% of revenue; freight is 67%.
- The Point McKenzie Rail is a standalone project for the Mat-Su Borough. ARR is moving forward on the project for the summer season though only half of the funding is secure. An additional \$120 million is needed.

#### **Visit from Anchorage Fire Dept. Truck One Crew:**

- The Fire Station has a new hire who has recently completed his 18-month probation.
- All firefighters are currently renewing their medical/EMT certifications.
- Anchorage fire stations are conducting Quick Action Plan (QAP) visits of high rise and industrial buildings to update all information pertaining to occupancy, siding, ventilation, egress, etc.
  - Crowley asks if there are plans to conduct a QAP on their tank farm facilities. Brian of the AFD responds that he personally is conducting QAPs for all Port of Anchorage facilities and they can expect to see him around.
- AFD hopes everyone checked their smoke detectors on Daylight Savings. They recommend replacing carbon monoxide detectors every 5 years, as they lose their efficacy after several years.

- The snowpack has been light for spring, which likely points to a high-risk wildfire season. All are asked to clear brush from around their house. At the end of May there will be a pick-up service to remove any brush placed curbside in designated orange bags.
  - Melinda Gant offers to call the pick-up service to determine where drop-off locations will be. She offers to pick up a stack of orange bags if anyone would like some.
  - Tom Pease states that last year the bags were never picked up and sat on the curbside for weeks until he and Susanne hauled them away themselves. Melinda will investigate.
  - AFD reminds that anyone planning a controlled burn must contact the AFD to ensure they have satisfied all the requirements and conditions prior to burning.
- A reminder to all to keep bottled water, a blanket, a flashlight, and extra warm clothing easily accessible in event of an earthquake. Always keep a good pair of shoes by the door in case one needs to make a quick exit from the house.
- Question from Susanne DiPietro regarding the red gate and AFD access to the Port: AFD states that all City gates possess a “hox box” which contains the key to open the gate inside of them. AFD is able to easily open any hox box in the city.
- During the summer construction months, dispatch lets AFD know where road closures are at the beginning of each day.

#### **Honor for Ann Newell—Stephanie Kesler:**

- Ann Newell was recently inducted into the Alaska Women’s Hall of Fame for her achievements in human rights and public safety. At the age of 27, Anne became the first female officer at APD with the power of arrest. She is married to Carl Fleming.

#### **Anchorage School Bond 2013 Presentation by Mike Abbott (ASD Chief Operating Officer, and Govt Hill Resident:**

- Proposition 1 regarding a \$54 million bond for the ASD will be voted on March 26. The bond is for \$1 million less than the debt the ASD is paying this year; the bond will not increase the total debt load of the school board.
- The \$54 million goes to renovations to the Girdwood K-8 building, which currently is the least functioning facility in the ASD according to educational specifications. Aurora Elementary School on JBER is also in need of renovations. The rest of the funds will go to planning and design work for other school building renewals and life-extension projects.
- The State currently pays 65% of the ASD’s interest on debt. This bond would be less than \$5 per \$100,000 valuation for property owners.
- There will be a meeting on March 22 to discuss the ASD operating budget, in anticipation of assembly action approval.
- ASD does not borrow funds for operating expenses, such as salaries for personnel; they only borrow on capital assets such as real estate.

#### **A Presentation on an Alternate Perspective on House Bill 4 and the ASAP Gas Line by Taylor Bickford of Alaska Maximum Volume Pipeline (MVP):**

- Taylor is a consultant for the City of Valdez.
- Slide Deck from presentation: [NEED LINK](#)

- In response to the impending State fiscal crisis, declining gas and oil production, and energy supply crisis in the interior and south central, MVP is proposing a two-phase solution to Alaska's need for a gas pipeline.
  - Short Term Solution: A liquid natural gas trucking project to move gas from North Slope to interior and south central. Anticipated two years and \$250 million to complete.
  - Long Term Solution: Large volume gas line, currently being pursued by Governor, with the support of public industry and foreign constituents interested in purchasing Alaska gas. Seeks production for domestic use and foreign export to generate revenue for the State.
- Question: ASAP seeks a pipeline terminus at Cook Inlet. What is Valdez's stake in MVP?
  - Answer: Valdez believes they are the best port at tide water for the terminus of the pipeline.
- Question: How long would the trucking project serve as interim?
  - Answer: For as long as it takes construction of the pipeline, approximately 7 to 10 years. The timelines for ASAP and MVP are identical; however, MVP provides an interim solution.
- Question: What sort of transparency and oversight would MVP be subject to?
  - Answer: The State legislature has to approve all contracts.

#### **Tank Farm Committee Update—Arran Forbes:**

- Arran Forbes, Steve Gerlek, Bob French, and Susanne DiPietro attended a meeting with Crowley in early March. All in attendance agree it was a productive meeting to discuss Crowley's plans for the Terminal and the concerns of the Government Hill Community.
- Government Hill requested that Crowley's long range planning efforts bear in the mind the need to monitor changes in neighborhood hazard zones, and recommended several private companies that conduct such hazard studies.
- Crowley agrees it was a valuable exchange, and made note of the fact that their aerial maps showing the tank farm stop just short of showing the neighborhood it abuts (as pointed out by Steve); they have discussed the community's request for a more holistic mentality toward development of the tanks, as well as conducting a hazard study, with upper management. They appreciate the community's discussion of cumulative impacts with regard to the Port: it is not simply Crowley's tanks, but the combination of all tanks from multiple owners, as well as the Railroad, Port, and air force base, that synergistically affect the neighborhood, and without consistent or meaningful communication between stakeholders.

#### **Neighborhood Plan—Joni Wilm:**

- The Anchorage Assembly unanimous passed the Government Hill Neighborhood Plan; now a decision a must be made regarding which option in the plan the neighborhood would like to pursue. All plans involve the redevelopment of the commercial core (north of the bridge) with the intention of improving intersections, providing commercial and community space, a parking area and community gardens.
- To view animations of the proposed scenarios:  
<http://www.communitycouncils.org/download/6905.pdf>

- All scenarios are dependent on KABATA, which currently has plans to run a tunnel under the area being proposed for redevelopment. The neighborhood plan may be incorporated into their mitigation strategy.
- All design policies and principles conform to the Anchorage 2020 mission.

**Ship Creek Development Plan—Donna Rymut:**

- Melinda Gant and Donna Rymut attended a meeting for the Ship Creek Development Plan hosted by AEDC and the developer, Kling-Stubbins of Philadelphia, PA.
- Public proceedings will take place in April. AEDC will notify the FCC of public involvement specifics once determined. A design workshop will be held in May. The deadline draft is July 1.
- The focus of development is mixed residential and commercial.
- AEDC is conducting the feasibility study for proposed businesses.

**Port of Anchorage Update—Steve Ribuffo:**

- All documents relevant to the Port of Anchorage expansion project and subsequent issues, including the feasibility studies and presentations made to the mayor, Anchorage assembly, and geotechnical advisory are now posted online: <http://www.portofalaska.com/expansion-project.html>
- Correction of typo requested by Steve Ribuffo -- The USS Anchorage will be docking at the Port from April 26-May 5th.
- Steve requests additional speaking time at the next GHCC meeting.

**Alley Refuse Collection Committee—Mavis Hancock:**

- Discussion regarding overhead utilities is ongoing. The committee is currently in limbo while solid waste services, municipal light and power, and the City continue dialogue.
- A meeting was held in early March regarding alley service and overhead utilities. ML&P was not informed of the meeting and did not attend. However, their trucks have recently been seen multiple times in neighborhood alleys.

**Knik Arm Crossing Update—Bob French:**

- Hearings from the House and Senate transportation committees are ongoing. Many amendments to the project were proposed, but all have been voted down. Soon it will be passed from transportation to the finance committees. The transportation committee showed disregard for financial issues, including the issuance of a toll.
- The bill creates unlimited reserve funds for operating costs of the bridge once it is built. It is estimated that the money needed for operating expenses is significantly more than total revenue. The bill obligates the legislature to put as much money per year as needed to fill this gap, including at least \$50 million per year for the first three years. Estimated necessary toll revenue tops \$680,000 per day to close the gap.
- The Senate is holding a hearing March 26 at 1:30pm.
- The Chickaloon representative has become an unexpected opponent of the project.

**Other Business:**

- Melinda has started a Government Hill Facebook page and Twitter account (handle: GovHill). She is currently posting community facts, and pondering how to begin broaching controversial issues such as KABATA.
- Crowley states they are painting the interior of their tanks, and advises that close neighbors may smell some paint fumes.
- Lillian Koenig has a grant proposal from the Parks Department for up to \$40,000. She recommends applying for the grant for installation of equipment for disabled persons at Sunset Park. However, the grant is due March 23. Neighbors also point out that Sunset Park is targeted by both KABATA and the neighborhood plan. Mavis will take a look at the grant to see if similar grants issued in the future may be something for the council to consider.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:12 pm by President Stephanie Kesler.**