



GOVERNMENT HILL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

P.O. Box 100018 • Anchorage, Alaska 99510-0018

Stephanie Kesler, President

Bob French and Dan Lowery, Co-Vice Presidents

Diane Miller and Mark Musial, Co-Secretary-Treasurer

Wendy Lindskoog, Mavis Hancock, and Kathleen King, At-Large Board Members

Robert Atkinson, FCC Delegate; Harriet Shaftel, Alternate Delegate;

Susanne Di Pietro and Thomas Pease, Past Co-Presidents

MEETING MINUTES

January 19, 2006

Introductions - The meeting opened at 7:10 p.m. with Co-Vice President Bob French presiding. Introductions were made by all those in attendance.

Minutes from the December 15, 2005 meeting were approved with minor corrections in the spelling of names.

Legislative/Assembly Report – **Les Gara** called in to discuss happenings in Juneau. He noted that Bob French traveled to Juneau to testify regarding the Knik Arm Crossing, but reported that although there may be skepticism by the legislature for spending on the order of \$90M for the bridge, the Governor appears to strongly support it and it is rare for the legislature not to follow the Governor on such issues.

Oil tax reform appears to be a big issue this session. If tax reform passes the State may get more money for spending on local issues or to bolster a savings account. Both parties tend to think that saving some money would be good, but they differ on how the remainder should be spent, with Democrats favoring education and Republicans favoring construction.

Dan Lowery asked if any part of the budget looks as if it would pass easily. Les responded that the education budget would likely pass, but that there would still be cuts in funding in our schools, as most of the increase would go toward funding retirements.

Les noted that Letters to the Editor are a very effective way to get your Legislator to pay attention to an issue. Legislators take an interest in what the public is discussing and regularly read these. Bob French seconded this and reminded us of the importance of keeping letters flowing about the Knik Arm Crossing.

Les also reported that an “In Memoriam”, essentially legislative recognition of a person’s life, was reserved for Stu Hall. Somebody needs to write the dedication, perhaps Bobbi Bianchi. A motion was passed to prepare this document on behalf of the Government Hill Community Council (GHCC) and forward it to Les.

Alan Tesche reported updated us on ongoing issues in the Assembly such as the cyclotron we heard discussed last month, a 3% sales tax that will hurt renters to the benefit of large property owners (this is definitely not homeowner tax relief, contrary to how it may be being sold to the public), a change in the Municipal Charter allowing non-police to write parking tickets and

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enforce expired tags, , a repeal of the reforms in our sign ordinance to allow the proliferation of large signs that originally prompted the ordinance, and there is a move to once again require the mayor to get 50% of the vote in an election. See Alan's website at www.tesche.us for more details.

Alaska Railroad – Ship Creek Intermodal Project – Wendy Lindskoog and Deb Allen with the Alaska Railroad provided an overview of the intermodal project. Deb described the 3 phases of the project: 1) 4 new tracks that will allow improved passenger service and the mainline to operate while passengers are being loaded; 2) Upgrading the Depot to improve customer flow and add office space since the current Depot is over capacity; and 3) a Departure Lounge over the tracks, including an overhead walk from E St. Construction on Phase 1 is scheduled for July at a cost of about \$19M. Total cost for all phases is about \$65M. See the Railroad website for more info or come to the open house on Jan 24 where they will have a scale model and you will have the chance to talk with the project manager of this and other capital projects.

Dan Lowery asked if the walkway would be open – yes, and unheated. Security was being considered. It was also noted that buses don't currently visit the depot and there is a need for bus stops to facilitate use by Transit Authority. Another suggestion was made to connect the Depot improvements to the Coastal Trail and then Government Hill - this option is apparently being considered in conjunction with other efforts by the Port of Anchorage.

Rep. Gara asked about a \$50M request by the Governor to study a rail link to Canada. Wendy clarified that a pre-feasibility study was underway with funding from the Yukon, Alaska, and Federal Governments to study the business case & other issues for a rail link. The Alaska Railroad is not the lead agency on this study. The study is scheduled for completion by the end of June 2006. The Governor has requested money in the event that the study shows the link is feasible so that work can begin on an EIS, which is estimated to cost about \$100M. Tom Pease got much tongue-in-cheek approval from his suggested that the money for the Knik Arm Crossing would be better spent on this project and encouraged the Railroad to take the lead.

The Railroad is also studying an extension of the rail to Delta Junction. They are authorized to issue about \$500M in bonds, with backing from the Department of Defense.

Mike Adams asked about future transit projects such as commuter service. A study was done in 2000, which indicated that a \$2M annual subsidy would be needed. GHCC members suggested that the study be updated, as things may be different given the considerable growth in the Valley recently. Parking in Anchorage is badly needed for this to be effective. Wendy indicated that the Railroad is laying the groundwork for this project, including parking improvements, but that the community needs to decide on funding. She also noted that comments such as these should be submitted at the open house.

Catholic Social Services Update – Linda McDevitt couldn't make it because she was sick. Look for her next month.

Elections – The floor was opened for nominations but none were offered other than the slate already proposed. The new 2006 officers were unanimously elected as a block. Congratulations and many thanks to our newly elected officers:

President	Stephanie Kesler
Co-Vice President	Bob French and Dan Lowery
Secretary/Treasurer	Melinda Gant
At-large Members	Mike Adams, Mavis Hancock, Diane Miller
FCC Delegate	Julie Jessal
FCC Alternate	Robert Atkinson

Parks Update - Doe Anderson with Parks and Rec discussed upcoming plans for our parks. She noted they have two new programmers - Jamie Atkins and Amy Dazel - who will be working to develop outreach to the community. They have been very active so far, with a first ever Holiday Camp over Christmas and a New Years at Noon event at the Egan Center. Jeff Dillon will be giving an update in March at a public forum on downtown parks – watch for this.

GHCC needs to submit a challenge grant by March 1 requesting a Municipal match for money raised by GHCC for parks. The GHCC contribution may include credit for ‘sweat equity’ at about \$17.55/hr for volunteer time. Such a grant could be used for many purposes including a memorial for Stu Hall. Mavis Hancock and Kathleen King will take the lead on submitting the grant application. Call Doe at 343-4163 with questions.

Stu Hall Memorial – Kathleen King reported that there was currently \$500 in the account and that she would be back in February with other ideas for fundraising, which will include selling some of Stu’s collection of mugs.

Knik Arm Crossing (KAC) Update – Bob French testified in Juneau. Although he was only given 3 minutes he had the opportunity to meet many Legislators and got a generally positive response to our position. GHCC members should go to the Republican Caucus website where they have a poll about spending for the bridge.

The KAC annual report for 2005 indicates spending of \$94M from the Governor, \$200M from Revenue Bonds and tolls, \$50M as a grant for MatSu roads, and another \$256 million in funding they were still searching for.

Emily Ferry has pamphlets listing the projects that need to be cut statewide in order to fund the KAC. People statewide should be encouraged to look at the list and make their opinions about losing funds for projects in their districts known to the Legislator. The Mayor also has a list of projects in jeopardy throughout Anchorage.

It is also important to send Letters to the Editor. As Rep. Gara noted, these letters get Legislators attention. If your letter isn’t published keep trying, as all letters are not published.

There will be a Feb 24 community wide meeting of Legislators. Check the LIO under Anchorage Delegation Town Meeting. This is another opportunity to make our views known.

Work continues on the “Anchorage Access Solution” Route, which the GHCC KABATA Committee has worked on with HDR-Rise to provide an alternative to the Degan and Erickson routes that are presently the only routes in consideration. Although requested to come to present the Anchorage Access Solution Route, HDR-Rise said that they could not get approval from KABATA to present the preliminary plans to the full GHCC for our comments. HDR-Rise and/or KABATA have been asked to make a presentation next month to discuss further.

Alan Tesche asked about GHCC’s thoughts on the use of Eminent Domain to force the project route through the community. He suggested that since the route doesn’t improve access to the rapidly growing areas in Wasilla and Palmer, the primary use for the bridge will be leisure users for outdoor sports and vacation properties or developers promoting private projects such as housing, hence use of Eminent Domain should be questioned under Anchorage’s new ordinance prohibiting it’s use for Private Economic Development and Leisure Projects. He proposed that if Eminent Domain can’t be used for the coastal trail extension, it shouldn’t be used for the bridge.

Hollywood Vista Update – The RFP date was being extended to Jan 30. More information on this project will be available next month.

Neighborhood Issues/Concerns -

Janel Walton proposed that we assign times to our agenda items in order to better control our time. Our meetings have regularly been running quite late recently, which may prevent some people from staying, or attending.

Jay Harris from Lighthouse Fellowship (272-2252) introduced himself and indicated they may be able to help with our parks. He also passed out information on a supplemental food program they sponsor and discussed a tutoring program they have to improve reading skills. Call him if you would like more information.

Upper Cook Inlet Security Committee – Bill Claar will be moving and unable to fulfill that position. GHCC will be contacting his alternate, Steve Pannone to confirm that he is willing to take on the job.

We need new vinyl for the GHCC sign. Janel may be able to get a donation.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM

Mark Musial

Co-Secretary-Treasurer