

SPECIAL ASSEMBLY MEETING NO. 2024-19 MINUTES

August 06, 2024 at 12:00 PM

Zoom Webinar Only



<https://juneau.zoom.us/j/91515424903> or 1-253-215-8782 Webinar ID: 915 1542 4903

This meeting is being conducted via Zoom Only.

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Weldon called the Special Assembly Meeting to order at 12:04 p.m. via Zoom.

B. ROLL CALL

Assemblymembers present: Mayor Beth Weldon, Deputy Mayor Michelle Hale, Wade Bryson, Greg Smith, Paul Kelly, Ella Adkison, 'Wáahlaal Gidaag, Christine Woll, Alicia Hughes-Skandijs (joined at 12:10p.m.)

Assemblymembers absent: None.

Staff Present: City Manager Katie Koester, Deputy Manager Robert Barr, City Attorney Robert Palmer, Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen, Deputy Clerk Diane Cathcart, Deputy Clerk Andi Hirsh, Eng/PW Director Denise Koch, Parks & Recreation Director George Schaaf, Port Director Carl Uchtyl, CDD Director Jill Lawhorn, Risk Manager Chelsea Swick, Assistant Attorney Sherri Layne, Assistant Attorney Nicole Lynch, Transit Superintendent Rich Ross, Port Operations Supervisor Scott Hinton, BRH Communications Director Erin Hardin, CCFR Administrative Coordinator Erin Russell, JSD Administrative Assistant Jessica Richmond

C. AGENDA TOPICS

Mayor Weldon asked City Manager Koester and Deputy Manager Barr to provide updates on the Mendenhall River flooding situation.

Manager Koester provided the following recap of the recent events:

At 3:15 a.m. this morning (Tuesday, August 6, 2024), the river crested at 15.99 feet. This was over a foot higher than last year's height and we saw significant inundation in areas not anticipated for inundation. The emergency shelter at Floyd Dryden was stood up and relatively quiet for much of the night. They started to receive activity between 1:00 a.m. and 3:00 a.m. with residents from Emily Way and Julep Street, areas originally thought to be outside the affected areas, who had to leave their homes in a hurry. Many residents arrived at the shelter in their pajamas and wet. Approximately 43 individuals came to the shelter and most of those residents are now out checking their property.

Manager Koester noted that Mayor Weldon arrived at City Hall just prior to the start of the Special Meeting and, having come from the valley, said that Riverside Drive was finally passable. Since it was just starting to be passable, staff has not yet had a chance to get out there and do an assessment. Some things staff does know is that likely over 100 homes were impacted by the flooding. There have not been any reports of homes falling into the river like they did last year, thanks to a lot of armoring along the river. There has been some erosion on CBJ property but only impacting recreational property, nothing impacting structures. Alaska Electric Light & Power (AEL&P) proactively turned off power in the flooded areas and, in coordination with Capital City Fire & Rescue (CCFR), is restoring power to neighborhoods once those areas are clear of hazards.

Manager Koester said she got an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) briefing before this meeting and they are waiting to get a full assessment of the disaster. In other damage assessment news, pedestrian bridges are still

closed. At 11:42 a.m. this morning, the river was at 9.72 feet and falling. Staff anticipates it to be out of flood stage by 4:00 p.m. today and people will be able to return to their homes and assess damage.

The next stage of CBJ operational response will be to send out people to inspect homes. They are coordinating with the Building Official and Red Cross to make sure there are no life/safety concerns. Eventually the state will be part of that process. As Mayor Weldon mentioned, Governor Dunleavy has declared a verbal disaster and that opened up State Emergency Disaster assistance. The Governor is sending two staff members to town today, one is a volunteer coordinator and the other will assist with identifying resources needed. Manager Koester said that eventually, she predicts, similar to last year, they will have a team in town to help with individual and public assistance. The state declaration does open up individual and public assistance to both residents and CBJ.

Manager Koester noted that some of the issues that will be front of mind for our residents include debris management. She said they are preparing another round of communication with the public that includes what is being called 'the monster press release' which will have all this information. She said they are encouraging the public to contact CBJ using the floodresponse@juneau.gov email address as it allows staff to track and triage. She said we are also currently having some issues with CBJ phone lines hosted by ACS which is inopportune timing.

Manager Koester said that they have had a lot of interest from Governor Dunleavy and the Congressional Delegation. She said they will be making sure to leverage those conversations and their willingness to assist CBJ with this response.

Mayor Weldon asked Mr. Barr if he had anything to add from the EOC.

Mr. Barr said there are a lot of moving pieces from an operational standpoint right now, but that Manager Koester did a good job capturing the high-level points. He said they have a lot of work going on right now with respect to drone mapping helping us understand the extent of the disaster. He said they are preliminarily happy with the sewer valves that were recently installed and all seemed to have worked as intended and are working on verifying that information. Mr. Barr noted that one of the things they are focused on is caring for long-term sheltering needs. The shelter is mostly empty now but as properties are inspected, they are aware that residents may need to come back and use the shelter.

Mayor Weldon said she had also been quite busy this morning going around taking pictures and sending them to Mr. Barr. Mayor Weldon was on the phone with the Governor's office several times this morning, and reported that Senator Sullivan has reached out to FEMA, so they are aware of what is going on. She spoke with Senator Murkowski's office and Representative Peltola's office to let them know what is going on.. Governor Dunleavy will arrive in Juneau tomorrow. Senator Murkowski is in Yakutat and is working to adjust her schedule to return to Juneau. Senator Sullivan is on his way back to Alaska and she anticipates that he will stop in Juneau on his way back home. Representative Peltola is scheduled to be in Juneau on Saturday.

Mayor Weldon gave a shout out to CCFR who did a number of evacuations, including the evacuation of one wheelchair bound individual who ran out of oxygen when the power went out. Mayor Weldon noted that she just received a text from AEL&P noting that all the power was back up. She thanked all the linemen who have been boots-on-the-ground responding to this. She said that Public Works and Docks & Harbors staff have been out there assisting individuals with pumps for crawl spaces and other needs. She gave kudos to Max Mertz who was up at the crack of dawn this morning organizing the business community to assist with responding; and the Baranof Hotel has reached out to offer hotel room availability for affected residents. She commended the Juneau community for coming together to help their neighbors and she extended the thanks of the Assembly to everyone who has played a role in assisting their neighbors during this event.

Mayor Weldon then opened up the floor to questions from the Assembly.

Mr. Bryson asked about what the trash procedure might be as people start the cleanup process in the next 24-48 hours and asked if we would be doing something similar to last year.

Manager Koester said that CBJ will lean in as much as we can, but the challenge is that this is a wider scoped event with more homes involved. She explained the process of CBJ staff assisting last year and coordination with Waste

Management. She said that she anticipates it will be more difficult this year. While CBJ cannot remove trash from private property, we can remove trash that happens to be in the Right-of-Way.

Mayor Weldon noted that while the roads may be passable in areas, this is not the time to go driving around and sightseeing while people are trying to get their homes back in order.

Ms. Hale thanked everyone for all their support. She asked if the information that will be provided will include tips and information on how best to proceed when your home is flooded. Mr. Barr said that they will be including information about flood response prepared by FEMA in their press release.

Mr. Smith extended his appreciation to everyone who has been assisting in this response. He asked if there is a centralized channel for people who want to provide assistance or volunteer. Manager Koester said they are working with community groups such as the Juneau Community Foundation and the State EOC is sending down a volunteer coordinator. At this time, contacting the floodresponse@juneau.gov email is a great way to get the information into the queue and will help them communicate that information with a coordinator who will be able to coordinate those volunteer efforts.

Ms. Woll also extended her thanks. She asked if there was anything else that Assemblymembers can assist with other than just passing this emergency declaration.

Manager Koester said that in events like this, the best role the Assemblymembers can take on is their role as a CBJ ambassador in helping to disseminate the communication that the EOC is pushing out. We are still trying to get our arms around what we are trying to communicate. Manager Koester asked members if they can help forward emails to the community members when they do receive those communications/press releases. Ms. Hale said that with everything happening so quickly, she asked if there was any way that as soon as the notices are sent out, if they could also be simultaneously (or as close to that as possible) updated on the CBJ website. Manager Koester said they will continue to try to do that as quickly as possible.

1. Resolution 3071 A Resolution of the City and Borough of Juneau Declaring a Local Emergency in Response to the August 2024 Glacier Outburst Flood and a Request for State and Federal Assistance.

CBJ [Charter 3.12\(c\)](#) authorizes the Assembly to call a special meeting to declare a disaster emergency. This resolution does that. The flooding from the glacier outburst flood that started yesterday is unprecedented, and a foot higher than last year (15.99' at 3:15 a.m. this morning). It inundated hundreds of homes and displaced countless people. We had at least 43 people seek refuge in Floyd Dryden and countless others evacuated out of the area. Hundreds of vehicles were flooded. We are just starting to assess the damage, but it is more expansive than last year's flood. We anticipate the need for temporary and long-term sheltering assistance; financial support to individuals and businesses; environmental cleanup support due to fuel oil spills; and resources (people, equipment, supplies, and trash disposal) for flooded structures. As we continue with damage assessments, we will develop a more comprehensive understanding of the private and public damage caused by this natural disaster. Resolution 3071 would declare a local disaster emergency and request State and federal assistance.

The City Manager recommends the Assembly adopt this resolution.

Public Comment

Mayor Weldon asked if anyone from the public cared to testify on this topic. Hearing none, she closed public testimony and called for Assembly action.

Assembly Action

MOTION by Ms. Hale to adopt **Resolution 3071 A Resolution of the City and Borough of Juneau Declaring a Local Emergency in Response to the August 2024 Glacier Outburst Flood and a Request for State and Federal Assistance** and asked for unanimous consent.

Hearing no objection, the resolution was adopted by unanimous consent.

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mayor Weldon said that if anyone from the public had any questions that weren't answered previously to please raise their virtual hands to testify. No hands were raised, and no other testimony was requested.

Mayor Weldon then asked if any Assemblymembers had any further questions or comments. Hearing none, Mayor Weldon thanked everyone for showing up to the virtual meeting and for all the hard work they are doing to keep us informed.

F. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Special Assembly meeting was adjourned at 12:32 p.m.

Signed: _____

Elizabeth J. McEwen
Municipal Clerk

Signed: _____

Beth A. Weldon
Mayor