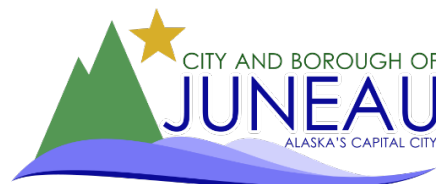


# ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE WORKSESSION MINUTES

March 06, 2023 at 6:00 PM



## Assembly Chambers/Zoom Webinar/YouTube Livestream

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### A. CALL TO ORDER

Deputy Mayor Maria Gladziszewski called the meeting to order at 6:00p.m. in the Assembly Chambers. Due to technical difficulties experienced at the beginning of the meeting, the Land Acknowledgement, Roll Call, and Approval of the Agenda were not part of the Zoom recording of the meeting.

### B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

### C. ROLL CALL

**Assemblymembers present:** Mayor Beth Weldon (via Zoom), Deputy Mayor Maria Gladziszewski, Carole Triem, Greg Smith, Wade Bryson, Alicia Hughes-Skandijs, Christine Woll, 'Wáahlaal Gíidaak, and Michelle Hale (via Zoom)

**Assemblymembers absent:** None

**Staff Present:** City Manager Rorie Watt, Deputy Manager Robert Barr, City Attorney Sherri Layne, Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen, Deputy Clerk Andi Hirsh, Lands Manager Dan Bleidorn, Finance Director Jeff Rogers, Assistant City Attorneys Adam Gottschalk and Benjamin Brown, Parks and Recreation Director George Schaaf, Tourism Manager Alix Pierce

### D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented.

### E. AGENDA TOPICS

#### 1. Broadband Access/Digital Equity Presentation by Rasmuson Foundation

State of Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development Alaska Broadband Office Tribal Liaison Melissa Kookesh gave a presentation on Broadband and Digital Equity. The Federal Infrastructure and Jobs Act passed by Congress and the State House Bill 363 passed during the last session created the Alaska Broadband Office. Their office is charged with providing "Internet for All" and they are partnering with the Rasmuson Foundation, the Alaska Municipal League, and other agencies to provide access to high-speed reliable broadband to all Alaskan citizens.

The goal of the initiative is to provide digital equity at affordable prices through a transparent process that engages communities and results in a strong governance structure. Each state is charged with identifying barriers to digital equity and strategies for overcoming those barriers. It is anticipated that there will \$400-550 million dollars available in federal funds for Alaska broadband.

The Broadband Access Office is developing Alaska's Digital Equity plan; they anticipate it will take approximately five years to develop and implement. The statewide vision for the plan is to build a digital equity framework and scorecard, develop plans for digital literacy innovation programs, propose technology-related apprenticeship or other workforce opportunities, integrate with the State's Economic Development Strategy, and take steps to implement the Digital Equity Plan.

The populations covered by the plan include low-income individuals (at or below 150% of the poverty level), individuals aged 60 or older, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals with a language barrier, members of a racial or ethnic minority group, rural Alaskans, and incarcerated individuals outside of a federal facility.

The roll out includes listening sessions, public presentations, open public comment processes, raising awareness using social media, email, and other media through local advertisements, public service announcements and news articles. They also are partnering with institutions to help distribute information and to host listening sessions. Most listening sessions will occur between October 2022 – April 2023. Ms. Kookesh highlighted events such as the upcoming Gold Medal Basketball tournament as prime opportunities to engage with residents.

Ms. Kookesh said that they will be hosting two local listening sessions within the week, one for the public and one for agency representatives to help them in their asset inventory. She encouraged CBJ Assemblymembers and staff to help get the word out into the communities about these efforts and to provide her with contact information for community connections that their office should be reaching out to.

Ms. Kookesh then answered questions and suggestions from Assemblymembers.

Ms. Woll suggested she may want to reach out to the CBJ public libraries as one of the community connections and Ms. Hale suggested that she may want to be in contact with the CBJ Commission on Aging.

Ms. Hale and Ms. Kookesh spoke to the Affordable Connectivity Program and Ms. Kookesh said that she worked with AML to apply for that program so that it could be made available to all eligible Alaskans. The Affordable Connectivity Program subsidizes \$75 for the internet connection to your home or other device for low-income individuals, students, and others who qualify. Ms. Kookesh assisted her mother in applying for the grant, which she eventually received; she was also eligible for the lifeline program at \$1/month.

Ms. Kookesh answered additional questions related to the unique challenges to Alaska. She spoke about a range of connectivity methods such as fiberoptic, microwave, and satellite methods and the pros and cons of each.

Ms. Triem and Ms. Kookesh spoke about the FCC mapping challenge project and how many Alaskan communities or portions of community were missed in the initial mapping project. Ms. Triem said that she would like CBJ to get involved in the listening sessions, at least to promote the grant program application process.

Ms. Kookesh said that she sees millions of dollars coming to Alaskan citizens if they could help those eligible submit for a grant.

## **2. Systemic Racism Review Committee (SRRC) - Change to Charge**

Deputy Manager Barr introduced this legislation/charge review. He noted that there is a memo in the packet from Assistant Attorney Adam Gottschalk that incorporates the changes requested by the committee.

The following members of the SRRC were present in person or via Zoom: Chair Grace Lee, Ephraim Froehlich, Gail Chaney, and Ivan Nance.

Chair Lee and Mr. Froehlich spoke to the SRRC's request to expand the scope of their work to include projects. They spoke to the committee's experience so far in reviewing legislation to try to identify issues of systemic racism and how they are running up against questions touching on legislation but they are constrained by the committee's current charge.

Assemblymembers asked them to describe examples. Mr. Froehlich gave the example of land use and land transfers and while they were charged with just looking at the legislation, they also had questions related to who else may be impacted by the legislation, if there were any situations where right of first refusal, etc. A second example was the reorganization of the Parks and Recreation affiliated boards, where SRRC questions included advertising and selection process. However, those questions started falling out of their scope. Chair Lee said that they only have access to the legislation but areas that might have systemic racism concerns are in processes.

Wáahlaal Gíidaak previously served as the liaison to the SRRC and her regular job is in the space of racism and equity. She said that when we look at systems, we must look at the WHY. She noted that the SRRC scope is to look at the WHAT, but that is just looking at one piece of the puzzle and not the whole system. She said she is supportive of the changes the SRRC proposed.

The Assembly and SRRC then had an extensive question and answer dialogue about how the SRRC was formed, the charge it was tasked with, the best ways to move forward, and how they might look at the budget and be more proactive in their work rather than reactive if this change was implemented. Some of the concerns raised included the additional time that would be required of the SRRC members and staff to complete the projects. Chair Lee expressed a desire for the Assembly to provide them with a list of items that the Assembly would like the SRRC to look at. They discussed how best to approach the review of the budget.

In a discussion about the SRRC sunset date, SRRC members said they wanted to continue past the current sunset date and that was the first request for this change to the committee's charge. Answering a question about whether to try to combine the SRRC with the Juneau Human Rights Commission, Chair Lee answered that they have different enough scopes that it made sense to keep them as two separate committees. Chair Lee said that the reasons their recommendations have been somewhat vague is because they are constrained by what they can do.

SRRC member Gail Chaney said that she has a background in organizational development and that change takes time. The Assembly created this committee, and they created a tool but there is not a lot of data to support that tool yet.

SRRC member Ivan Nance said he is interested in being proactive rather than reactive. His interest as a non-lawyer and non-government worker is that they be proactive, efficient, and effective.

Mayor Weldon thanked everyone on the SRRC for their service and said this has been a very in-depth discussion and she would like to hold this in the COW to give members time to think about this further.

**MOTION** by Mayor Weldon to keep this topic in the COW for additional discussion.

Ms. Triem said that she would like to schedule a joint meeting of the Assembly and the SRRC. She said she heard the concerns raised by other members and suggested they may be able to address those issues in a joint meeting rather than in the SRRC legislation.

**OBJECTION** by Ms. Woll. She said that the Assembly doesn't do a lot of listening to their committees and that she would like to forward this suggested language for introduction at an Assembly meeting if the Mayor's motion fails.

Further discussion took place about whether to leave the charge to change in committee for amendment or to forward it to the Assembly as presented by the SRRC.

**Roll Call Vote on the Mayor's motion to keep this topic in the COW for an additional meeting.**

**Yeas:** Mayor Weldon, Ms. Hale, Mr. Smith

**Nays:** Mr. Bryson, Ms. Hughes-Skandijs, Ms. Triem, Ms. Woll, 'Wáahlaal Gíidaak, Ms. Gladzsizewski

**Motion failed 3 Yeas, 6 Nays.**

Mr. Smith said that he would like to put forth some amendments to the language from the SRRC memo. After working with staff Mr. Smith proposed the following motion.

**MOTION** by Mr. Smith to add "or at the request of the Assembly" after the words "at the discretion of the Committee" to the following section in the SRRC memo:

(2) Reviewing proposed legislation, including the budget, selected at the discretion of the Committee, all ordinances after introduction and before public hearing to advise whether the ordinance likely includes a systemic racism policy or implication.

Mr. Bryson called a point of order. He said that he thought the Assembly already had that privilege. Ms. Layne replied that the Assembly already sends legislation to the SRRC and that if the Assembly wants to send a topic to the SRRC they can.

Additional discussion took place, and the Assembly took a 10-minute break.

Following the break, Mr. Smith asked the SRRC members how they might feel about the concept of a joint annual meeting with the Assembly to get goals and/or direction.

Chair Lee said the SRRC would be glad to meet with the Assembly on setting goals and priorities.

*Mr. Smith withdrew his motion.*

**MOTION** by Ms. Woll to direct staff to draft an ordinance for introduction that would incorporate the changes requested in the memo by the SRRC.

**OBJECTION** by Ms. Hale; she said further discussion and work was needed. Mayor Weldon also noted objection for the same reasons.

#### **Roll Call Vote**

**Yeas:** Mr. Smith, Mr. Bryson, Ms. Hughes-Skandijs, Ms. Triem, Ms. Woll, 'Wáahlaal Gíidaak, Ms. Gladziszewski

**Nays:** Ms. Hale, Mayor Weldon

**Motion passed 7 Yeas, 2 Nays.**

Deputy Mayor Gladziszewski thanked the members of the SRRC for coming. She then said that they would switch the agenda order to take up the iRide Alaska Lease Request for use of West Douglas Pioneer Road before the Affordable Housing Fund loans since there were members in the audience present for the iRide Alaska item.

#### **4. iRide Alaska Lease Request for use of West Douglas Pioneer Road**

Mr. Watt said that this topic, a commercial use permit for the West Douglas Pioneer Road, was forwarded to the COW from the Assembly and had previously been discussed in the Lands, Housing, and Economic Development Committee. Mr. Watt provided an overview of documents in the packet and thanked the Lands, Parks and Recreation, and Community Development Department staff members who worked collaboratively on this topic.

Mr. Bryson declared a potential conflict of interest; he said that he has a business that sells e-bikes but is not involved in tours.

Mr. Smith asked if there are recreational areas that do not allow commercial activities. Mr. Schaaf said that they follow the Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP) plans which restrict commercial activities in certain areas, such as Cope Park, or the 30-year-old trails working group recommendations and Parks and Recreation regulations.

Discussion took place about where and when to discuss tourism in general, such as concentration verses dispersion of tourism and community impacts. Mr. Watt said they have not yet developed a process for talking about community impacts. He also mentioned that an update to the trails plan was started but got derailed by COVID. Ms. Triem said a lot of discussion about tourism took place during the Visitor Industry Taskforce Meetings, including the recommendation that tourism be spread throughout the borough.

Assemblymembers had questions for iRide partners Mr. King and Mr. Willis, primarily regarding logistics surrounding parking, bathrooms, and bike placement.

Ms. Woll asked about how CBJ would manage future commercial use requests for Pioneer Road. Mr. Watt said that they would consider the Pioneer Road under Parks and Recreation. Mr. Barr noted that Parks and Recreation looks at all commercial use permit requests for an area at once.

**MOTION** by Mayor Weldon to direct the City Manager to negotiate with iRide Alaska and introduce an ordinance to authorize the use of the property for one year.

Mr. Bryson said that activities like the proposal by iRide Alaska are listed in the Comprehensive Plan and the 2015 Economic Development Plan. Mr. Bryson noted that had iRide Alaska picked a trail, it would not have come to the Assembly at all. He spoke in support of the iRide Alaska proposal.

**Amendment #1** by Mr. Bryson to allow for the renewal of the lease after a review.

Mr. Smith asked for clarification on the amendment around the number of renewals allowed. Mr. Bryson said he has not considered that yet; he said his intent in the amendment is not to limit the business to only one year, which might prohibit financing for them.

Ms. Gladziszewski stated that a renewal could be part of the negotiation and drafting process.

*Mr. Bryson removed his amendment.*

**OBJECTION** by Mr. Smith; he said he liked the project, including the location and ingenuity, but he felt like a more robust discussion about tourism needed to take place first.

**Roll Call Vote**

**Yeas:** Mr. Bryson, Ms. Triem, Ms. Woll, 'Wáahlaal Gíidaak, Ms. Gladziszewski, Ms. Hale, Mayor Weldon,

**Nays:** Ms. Hughes-Skandijs, Mr. Smith

**Motion passed 7 Yeas, 2 Nays.**

The Assembly took a 5-minute break and resumed at 8:35pm.

**3. Affordable Housing Fund Loans**

Mr. Watt said that loans are one of the most complex things that the city does, and when they loan money from the Affordable Housing Fund they are moving beyond what banks are willing to do. Mr. Watt said the first loan was with a senior housing project where CBJ sold land at a reduced interest rate. The second loan was to Gastineau Lodge Apartments, and it took over a year to develop terms acceptable to both CBJ and the developer.

Mr. Watt said that before the Assembly is a \$1.2 million dollar loan to Ridgeview Properties, LLC for a project which has the potential to add a significant amount of housing in Juneau. Mr. Watt said that during negotiations CBJ reiterated that they would like affordable housing units. The property developer proposed a variety of methods to make that happen, but they are all long term and provide a very small number of affordable units. According to Mr. Watt, the property developer said that the economics of the project means they can only provide 5 affordable units for the 25-year loan. Mr. Watt said that is a long time to tie up 1.2 million dollars for a small number of units. Mr. Watt proposed a possible alternative which was a shorter duration, 0% or low interest loan to a private developer without requiring affordable units and looking to nonprofits in the future for affordable units. Mr. Watt asked the Assembly to discuss their philosophy and how they want to use the Affordable Housing Fund Loan in the future.

Ms. Triem said that when an area adds housing units, even if they are not specifically designated as affordable housing, the overall cost of housing goes down because the housing stock increases. Ms. Triem said that she is hesitant to restrict CBJ in the future, as adding any housing units helps with affordability.

Ms. Triem asked for clarification about payback terms for this loan. Mr. Watt answered that the developer proposed no payments for 10 years, then paying off the loan in years 11-25. Mr. Watt said he likes the model used for the senior housing, where they did not pay any interest or payments on the land for 5 years and then paid for the land afterwards at an interest rate that matched CBJ's long term investment portfolio.

Ms. Hale said across the country developers cannot include affordable housing due to economics and it behooves the municipal government to not attach strings to developers.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs asked if the senior project included an affordable component. Mr. Watt said that in addition to the land sold at favorable cost, the Assembly gave a \$2 million dollar grant to insure lower income units. Mr. Watt said for the Ridgeview project, CBJ does not own the land and is not giving a grant.

Ms. Triem said that the applications they've received from nonprofits have been for low-income housing, not workforce housing. She said she wants to see more applications for workforce housing.

**MOTION** by Ms. Hale to direct the City Manager to bring back an amended ordinance 2022-06(b)(AK) with workforce housing requirement removed and asked for unanimous consent.

**OBJECTION** by 'Wáahlaal Gíidaak; she said she objected that the funding is coming from the Affordable Housing Fund without a requirement for affordable housing which is not the intent of the Affordable Housing Fund.

Mr. Bryson said 'Wáahlaal Gíidaak and Ms. Triem are both correct, but that CBJ can take small steps to make it easier to develop housing.

**Roll Call Vote**

**Yeas:** Mr. Bryson, Ms. Triem, Ms. Woll, Ms. Gladziszewski, Ms. Hale, Mayor Weldon, Ms. Hughes-Skandijs, Mr. Smith

**Nays:** 'Wáahlaal Gíidaak

**Motion passed 8 Yeas, 1 Nays.**

**F. STAFF REPORTS**

**G. NEXT MEETING DATE - April 3, 2023, 6 p.m.**

**H. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS**

**5. RED FOLDER-Broadband Access/Digital Equity Presentation**

**I. ADJOURNMENT**

*There being no more business to come before the Committee of the Whole, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm.*