

Haines Borough
Borough Assembly Special Meeting
June 30, 2009
MINUTES

Approved

THIS WAS A SPECIAL MEETING HELD PRIMARILY FOR CONSIDERING PC DOCK RESTROOMS AND OTHER IMPROVEMENTS. THE ASSEMBLY WILL ALSO BRIEFLY CONSIDER APPROVAL OF A WELL & FIT COMMUNITY CENTER LEASE OF THE FORMER PRIMARY SCHOOL BUILDING. NO OTHER ISSUES WILL BE CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE TO THE FLAG Mayor HILL called the meeting to order at 6:00pm in the Assembly Chambers of the Public Safety Building and led the pledge to the flag.
2. ROLL CALL Present: Mayor Jan HILL and Assembly Members Norm SMITH, Jerry LAPP, Pete LAPHAM, Doug OLERUD and Scott ROSSMAN. Absent: Steve VICK.

Planning Commission Members Present: Donnie TURNER, Andy HEDDEN, Robert VENABLES, Greg BRASK, Rob GOLDBERG, Lee HEINMILLER.

Tourism Advisory Board Members Present: Gregg JOHNSON, Jeff BUTCHER, Judy HEINMILLER, Jason GAFFNEY, and John HUNT.

Staff Present: Tom BOLEN/Borough Manager, Julie COZZI/Borough Clerk, Lori STEPANSKY/Tourism Director, Brad MAYNARD/Director of Public Facilities, Debra SCHNABEL/Project Clerk, Joe PARNELL/Assistant Harbormaster.

Visitors Present: Jessica EDWARDS/CVN, Dick SOMERVILLE/PND, Bill and Libby KURZ, Sean GAFFNEY, Thad STEWART, Mike CASE, Duck and Karen HESS, and others.

Motion by OLERUD: Excuse ROSSMAN and VICK. It was seconded by LAPP. The motion carried unanimously. [ROSSMAN subsequently joined the meeting at 6:11pm.]

3. APPROVAL OF SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Remove Item 4A. It will be added to the 7/14 agenda.

Motion by LAPP: Approve the Agenda, as amended. It was seconded by OLERUD. The motion carried unanimously.

4. BUSINESS

A. Lease Agreement - Well & Fit Community Center - Removed from Agenda.

B. PC Dock Restrooms and Other Improvements

BOLEN reviewed diagrams he had posted on the white board

and briefly summarized the history of the project including the various concepts, impacts, and permitting. **SOMERVILLE** reviewed the handouts that PND prepared for the meeting involving concepts 3, 4, and 5 with cost estimates. **SMITH** asked why people are concerned about cutting costs if it is cruise ship head tax money that is paying for this project. **BOLEN** said 1.9m is available for this project but added that the ability to cut costs is important in the event of cost overruns. **BRASK** asked if leftover head tax monies could be put toward other projects. **BOLEN** said there are restrictions, especially in the case of a specific legislative appropriation. **SOMERVILLE** estimated that the effort to get the necessary federal and state permitting will cost in the \$20K range.

BOLEN said the planning commission expressed to him a desire to see something take place this season, possibly the pile-supported design. **SOMERVILLE** explained that putting the facility on piles might not address parking needs but could be done more quickly. He added that, at this point, it will be very difficult to construct anything in 2009. **OLERUD** asked for an estimated Concept 5 construction timeline. **SOMERVILLE** responded that it could likely be ready by summer 2010 provided the 6-month permitting process began now. The project could be advertised in January 2010 and the work begun in the spring. With a mid-April construction start, the embankment could likely be in place by mid-June. He added that construction would obviously have to be scheduled around cruise ship calls.

ROSSMAN asked if additional off-shore piling could be driven in the future to accommodate bigger needs. **SOMERVILLE** agreed and said it would require a new round of permitting. He cautioned that there would be higher long-term maintenance costs with pilings. **S.GAFFNEY** said the \$1 million cost difference between the pilings concept and Concept 5 could buy a lot of maintenance. The current boat harbor renovation contractors have the pile driving equipment onsite and have said they could possibly do it this year to save mobilization costs.

K.HESS suggested the area just off the dock apron as a location for restrooms. **BOLEN** said it would compromise future parking needs. **GOLDBERG** brought up the issue of fort-area snow disposal. If there is a sloped embankment, a removable safety railing would allow snow dumping over the embankment. **TURNER** said Concept 5 would work better

for snow removal but wondered about liability if the railing was removed. **SOMERVILLE** agreed that it would be a huge liability if the railing wasn't put back on after each snow dump.

HEDDEN said he likes Concept 5, and it's high time to make a decision. **ROSSMAN** suggested that the temporary restroom trailer could be used in the 2010 season so that the embankment and other construction work could proceed. Then the restroom facility could be constructed after the season is done.

Mayor **HILL** said one thing to consider is that citizens value the waterfront view. The waterfront should not be engulfed in buildings stretched along the walkway. She said the temporary restrooms will be in place on Thursday, July 2nd, and she encouraged everyone to go down to see what it looks like to have a structure on the waterfront and how it might affect the view. **HEINMILLER** noted that it will also be important to see what it looks like from the visitor's standpoint on the dock side.

BOLEN said Army Corps representatives visited Haines on a different matter, and he brought the permitting issue up to them. He asked what would drive the permitting timeline. They informed him that the process is affected by workload and how complicated the site is. He asked them to look at the site, and they obliged. They unofficially reported that they saw nothing out of the ordinary, and it looked straightforward. **BOLEN** went on to say that the piling concept would be quicker to permit because those are little areas of impact, but given the logistics, design, and other considerations, it may not provide significant time savings. Regarding the waterfront view, he explained that when this task was first pondered and given to PND, it included an artist's rendition of how it would look. He chose to remove that element from the contract to cut the costs down. He wondered if one of the many excellent local artists might provide a rendition.

Motion by **ROSSMAN**: Authorize Concept 5. It was seconded by **LAPP**.

OLERUD asked to hear public comments prior to assembly discussion. **K.HESS** asked where the money is coming from. **BOLEN** said currently in hand is about \$1.9m regional head tax appropriation from the legislature. **SCHNABEL** expressed concern that the borough is considering launching out on a project that will cut off the walking beach. If Concept 5 goes into permitting, she plans to write to the Army Corps

of Engineers and object. The expanse the community now enjoys would be blocked off, and she believes there are other alternatives. It concerns her that the project is likely being driven by the fact that the borough has been given the money. She went on to say that Nukdik Point will be coming up for sale and some of the money could be used to purchase it and turn it into a public waterfront park. There may also be a need to put the money into another infrastructure that will preserve what the community has. All of the solutions on the table seem to involve construction. However, in other communities that have traffic issues, sections of road are simply blocked off and local traffic uses a detour route. The community doesn't need to fall through a funnel to solve this problem, because there are other options to explore. **D.HESS** agreed that the street could be blocked off. He said Lemcke's property is for sale and restrooms could be built there. If the street is blocked off, then the only worry would be the busses pulling out. **J.HEINMILLER** noted that the discussion about blocking off the road should consider that it is a state road, not a borough one.

B.KURZ said the choice should be as aesthetically pleasing as possible and one that would require limited future maintenance costs. **JOHNSON** clarified and **SOMERVILLE** confirmed that Concept 5 would not actually cut off the walking beach as suggested by **SCHNABEL**. **STEWART** said it is a community beach. Bathrooms are needed, but these plans seem way over the top to him. **K.HESS** said the fast ferry is taking a hit this year and the three business owners are trying to figure out what to do, because they seriously may not be able to pull it off. If the ferry goes down, the town will take a huge hit in reduced visitor traffic.

HUNT said he would like the assembly to consider that restrooms are needed on the dockside. Additionally, the covered pavilion would give people a place to stand out of the street but also provide a nice welcome. Maybe there is a current tourism downturn, but Alaska is full of boom & bust history. Haines has an existing building on the waterfront---Lookout Park---that is welcoming and used by locals and visitors. He disagreed with comments that the current PC Dock parking situation is fine. He said it should be nice looking, paved, and fully thought out, and he is in favor of Concept 5.

L.HEINMILLER explained that Concept 5 would still allow

walking most of the time in front of the armored rock wall. Local citizens need the restrooms; they try to use the Lutak Lumber restrooms. It would not be good for them to cross the road or go in the bushes. Every day of the summer season, the restrooms, pavilion, and beach access would be well used by locals and visitors alike. **BUTCHER** said he has watched this project for over seven years. It's gone through its own boom & bust times. In the early years, it was a lack of money. Now there is an appropriation, and he believes it's a good use of the funds. The timing's right and this is a good plan. The borough should move forward. **VENABLES** asked the assembly to discuss the option of combining the restrooms and pavilion into a single building, in light of concerns about visual impact.

BOLEN said although buildings are on the site plan, options could still be considered. For example, there could be a temporary pavilion put up every season. **ROSSMAN** clarified that his motion is for Concept 5 as presented in the PND drawing.

L.HEINMILLER said this will be something the local citizens will really enjoy using. He also said he would prefer that the buildings be lit rather than having light poles in the parking area. At the very least, the lighting should be the old-fashioned type that used to be in the fort. **LAPP** agreed with **L.HEINMILLER's** comments about the public using the facilities.

OLERUD said he's starting to rethink his position since hearing **SCHNABEL's** comments. The restrooms could be put on the Lemcke property across the street, even though he has previously been against that idea. He asked **SOMERVILLE** for a rough estimate of cost if only the valley gutter and sidewalk were put in along with paving the existing parking lot and locating the restrooms across the street. **SOMERVILLE** said a real rough guess is one-half million dollars not counting the cost of the Lemcke property. **K.HESS** said people go back and forth across the street all the time and believes a flashing light would be sufficient to control the vehicle traffic. **SMITH** concurred with what **SCHNABEL** said and will not vote for any of the concepts. **ROSSMAN** said with great frustration that the assembly keeps changing its mind and cannot seem to make a decision.

The motion failed 3-2 in a roll call vote with **OLERUD** and **SMITH** opposed.

Motion by **OLERUD**: Explore the possibility of buying the Lemcke property for the restroom facility site, along with paving the dock parking area and adding valley gutter and sidewalk. It was seconded by **SMITH**.

JOHNSON expressed dismay that this issue is continuing to go around and around. **GOLDBERG** said there was a time when he supported the Lemcke property idea. However, the highway would become a pedestrian mall, and he does not agree with closing the street when cruise ships are in. **BRASK** said maybe the borough is not clear on what head tax money can be spent on. He wants to downsize and put the restrooms across the street. **TURNER** said the planning commission has a great concern about local children running across the street from the beach in order to use the restrooms. **ROSSMAN** very strongly spoke against the motion, and **OLERUD** strongly defended his reasons for making it.

GOLDBERG said that when looking at long-term waterfront planning, the planning commission believes the Nukdik Point property would be a good park for locals and tourists. The borough should be able to continue to get the head tax monies year after year unless it's overturned at some point, and that property could be purchased and improved with, say, next year's receipts. **BOLEN** explained that there are two types of head tax money: \$5 and \$50 monies. The \$50 monies are regional head tax dollars that are appropriated by the legislature for a specific purpose. The Haines appropriation this year is specifically for Portage Cove restrooms and parking area. Any other use would require legislative reappropriation. The \$5 head tax monies can be spent on tourism-related uses as the municipality sees fit.

B.KURZ said he had hoped to see a concept decision this evening. **D.HESS** said he can't imagine why the borough wouldn't buy the Lemcke property to put the restrooms on. Also, the parking lot could be paved and the pavilion built next to the dock apron. **PARNELL** made a pitch for Concept 5 saying it would be an asset for the community. He believes it always costs more to make things better, and he hates to see it deadlocked. **J.GAFFNEY** said if this is the project the money is appropriated for, the borough should move forward with it. The funds will go away if not used.

The motion failed 2 to 3 in a roll call vote with **LAPP**, **ROSSMAN**, and **LAPHAM** opposed.

Motion by **OLERUD**: Reconsider the failed motion to Authorize Concept 5. It was seconded by **LAPHAM**. The motion carried 4-1 in a roll call vote with **SMITH** opposed.

This placed the following motion back on the table as though it had never been voted on in the first place:

Motion by **ROSSMAN**: Authorize Concept 5. It was seconded by **LAPP**.

OLERUD explained that although he is still not convinced Concept 5 is the best way to go, he believes it is important for the assembly to make a decision on this issue. For this reason, he made the motion to reconsider.

The motion carried 4 to 1 in a roll call vote with **SMITH** opposed.

5. ADJOURNMENT - 8:42pm

Motion by **OLERUD**: Adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by **LAPP**. The motion carried unanimously.

ATTEST:

Julie Cozzi, Borough Clerk
Julie Cozzi, Borough Clerk

Janice Hill, Mayor
Janice Hill, Mayor

