

Report of AML/NEO Attendance
by Tom Morphet 12/13/16

Checked with Municipality of Anchorage about a proposed AML resolution for a statewide general obligation bond for the Port of Anchorage in 2018. Assemblyman **Forrest Dunbar** emailed this message: "To my knowledge, there is no broader push for port bonding, though I can see how it would be attractive to do so. I think Anchorage could argue pretty persuasively that ours is a special case. About 80% of the imported goods consumed in Alaska go through our Port (according to what officials here tell me). As Dick Traini often says, it's really the Port of Alaska that happens to be located in Anchorage. And the pylons are so corroded that one major seismological event could bring the main dock down and paralyze the state. That being said, I don't think there would be harm in you reaching out to the AML leadership, and pitching your idea. If it would make the whole process more politically palatable for Alaskans, perhaps it's what needs to be done." Then Dunbar sent this follow-up email Dec. 9: "Funny, (Anchorage assembly member) **Eric Croft** just proposed a broader G.O. Bond package request, to make it more general. We'll see what the final language is that goes into our legislative request..." (Need to keep checking on this.)

I asked several people what they thought about \$90 per day per diem for Alaska. Everyone said it was high for meals. A few pointed out that it's about \$30 a day higher than the highest the state's per diem ever got for meals. (A friend who's an Anchorage executive for AC stores statewide said his company paid \$35 daily for meals). **Linda Murphy**, Soldotna vice-mayor and 25-year municipal clerk, said when we get bids containing high per diem requests, we can ask our manager to ask to renegotiate that part of the contract, preferable before assembly approval. (See if we can renegotiate that part of Corvis contract.)

During a public Q and A session, I questioned **Gov. Bill Walker** about whether the state DOT would continue to try to foist projects on to municipalities, such at the Klehini River bridge and harbors in Haines. Walker said he didn't know anything about it and would look into it. **Jesse Kiehl**, a Juneau assemblyman and staffer for state Sen. Dennis Egan, and AML lobbyist **Ray Gillespie** each told me the question was on the mark. Towns apparently are wising up. The Nov. 10 Petersburg Pilot reported DOT wanted to give Petersburg three docks, the town said "no" to one dock and asked for more money than the state's offer to take over the other two.

Gov. Walker, during his keynote address, said he would like municipalities to express to the Alaska Legislature that they would support taxation as a means of bridging the state's fiscal gap. Walker said he previously asked municipalities to support "a fiscal plan" for bridging the gap. (Consider resolution.)

Learned from state assessor **Marty McGee** that a municipality can have up to a 6 percent raw fish tax of its own, independent from the 3 percent raw fish tax presently levied by the state (which is split with municipalities, which get 1.5 percent). Several municipalities in western Alaska have adopted such taxes. McGee also said that municipalities can place their own, special tax on alcohol just as long as one other item (marijuana?) is taxed at the same amount. Such an alcohol tax would be on top of existing 5.5 percent borough sales tax.

A discussion with Sitka's fiscal officer **Jay Sweeney** revealed that Sitka puts all of its raw fish tax into its harbors, as well as harbor fees and other funds. Sitka recently wrote a plan for the financing its harbors into the future, including covering costs of depreciation. It requires an annual moorage rate increase of 6 percent for the next 20 years. Sitka fishermen responded by saying they were leaving town.

I spoke to **Michelle Hale** of DEC's water program about the advisability of building a new \$1.5 million building around a primary plant, based on the 301h waiver. I asked her, "Is that a safe investment?" She said: "I think it's probably a safe investment, but I'm not the EPA." (I didn't ask her about the advisability of rebuilding the guts of a primary plant for an additional \$4.5 million.) Hale also said: "I can't speak for the EPA but I don't think they're in any big rush to rescind those 301h waivers. They're in place indefinitely except that EPA periodically looks at them. I will say that if you have one of those waivers, be in compliance with your permit because when it comes time to renew those permits, they're going to be looking hard at whether you're in compliance."

Rene Broker, a borough attorney for Fairbanks for 20+ years, led AML sessions about Open Meetings and Open Records. I asked her about Haines Borough code that was changed about five years ago to not allow release of applications of people applying for lower-level borough jobs. "At my borough, every single application was considered a public record. We've got it right on (the form)... I don't think there's anything in Alaska State Law, as it applies to municipalities right now, that would (mandate keeping private) information about where someone went to school or what experience they have, really that's not private. Maybe take out if they have a confidential phone number. But their basic education and experience (and identity), no." Broker said she's not sure whether municipal laws that are more restrictive than the state Open Records Law have been tested in court.

Spoke with Wasilla mayor **Bert Cottle**, who is pushing for local control of issuance of liquor licenses within first-class and home-rule municipalities. Cottle is a career Alaska cop and former member of the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board. Such a change would allow the borough to issue beer/wine licenses to restaurants in Haines that now can't get them or have to jump through hoops to get them.

Spoke with **Mike Fleagle**, deputy chief of staff for U.S. Sen. Dan Sullivan about reviving federal revenue sharing for municipalities, a program that benefitted Haines until it was repealed in 1987. As Sullivan is allied with President Trump and Trump spoke of directing government funding away from foreign aid and toward domestic needs, I thought this idea might get traction. Federal revenue sharing primarily benefitted towns under 14,000.

During a presentation on how to hold meetings, presenter and Soldotna Vice-Mayor **Linda Murphy** said it was important to hold to time limits for speakers if we have such limits: "If you made me stop after 3 minutes and your friend comes in and testifies for 10

minutes, I'm not going to be happy. You have to be fair to everyone and treat everyone the same way."

AML lobbyist Ray Gillespie reported the little bit that's in the capital budget is for DOT roads and airport projects, some harbors, and schools. "Until there's a budget plan, the chances of a capital budget that all of us are in are fairly remote," Gillespie said.

Bimbling panned? During a skit on bad government, a fictitious manager spent many hours at a coffee shop. The script of the skit went: "I spend a lot of time at the coffee shop but I only do that to get a real feel for what the community wants."