

**CITY COUNCIL**

*Donna Chris  
Kent Harding  
Buford McComas  
Tad Miller  
Joanne Swanson  
Don Tubbs  
Allan Wintersteen, Mayor*



**CITY MANAGER**  
*William Hunter*

**CITY CLERK**  
*Connie Tucker*

**City of Bethel**  
**Special City Council Meeting Minutes**  
**July 8, 1995**

**I CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was convened at 4:00 p.m. by Mayor Wintersteen in the Log Cabin, Bethel, Alaska.

**II ROLL CALL**

Present: Chris, McComas (late), Swanson, Wintersteen

Absent: Harding, Tubbs

**III DISCUSSION ITEM--Seawall and Riverbank Erosion**

Mayor Wintersteen proposed the Council review the reports from the two meetings held in the previous week, listen to updates from representatives of the various agencies involved, discuss Resolution #95-39, open the meeting to the public for comments or questions, and then discuss Council action. The Council agreed by consensus.

Mayor Wintersteen then read the reports from the two meetings from the previous week which are attached as part of these official minutes.

Skip Barber, Regional Hydrologist, Department of Transportation, and Ken Hitch, Assistant Chief of Engineering, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, were called and participated in the meeting via speakerphone.

Frank Richards, Area Superintendent, Department of Transportation, addressed Council and stated that DOT had brought up 130 cubic-yard bags called supersacks to supplement the Corps' efforts to stabilize the toe of the seawall. Mr. Richards also stated that he had been authorized to purchase another 625 supersacks and that they would be arriving in Bethel that evening. Mr. Richards explained that the supersacks helped to stabilize the fill and would be used on the dock and the seawall.

Richard Hancock, Team Leader, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, addressed the Mission Road erosion area, and told Council that they were trying to establish a stabilized toe in that area, but that they could not proceed further until a permafrost overhang, which presented a

safety hazard, fell from the upper edge. Mr. Hancock stated that the Corps would review all options, and had spent approximately \$100,000-120,000 on the Mission Road area at that point. Mr. Hancock further estimated that the project would spend between \$10,000 and \$20,000 per day.

Mr. Hancock then reviewed the work on the Dock, informing Council that all but 3000 tons of riprap and gravel had been placed in front of the Dock, and that the Corps was looking at using the supersacks there as well. Mr. Hancock related the concern with the upstream portion of the Dock which were showing soundings at close the length of the pilings. Mr. Hancock stated he had significant concern for the Dock, but he did not think it would fail at this time, and added that Knik Construction had a barge leaving for St. Paul Island to load with gravel that would return the next Saturday for use at the Dock. Mr. Hancock had no cost estimate for the work at the Dock.

Don Luderback, Superintendent, Redd Samm Construction, assured Council that Redd Samm was doing all it could to assist with the situation, adding that it had come as a surprise. Mr. Luderback stated that they were exploring possibilities for other barges to haul rock and gravel, working under the direction of the Corps of Engineers.

Skip Barber, DOT, stated that he had spoken with the Director of Maintenance and Operations for the DOT and they were scheduling a trip to Bethel to review the situation. Mr. Barber said that he had a commitment that the department would do everything in its power to assist Bethel, and had been in contact with the Governor's office. Mr. Barber stated he was pleased that the supersacks seemed to have helped slow the erosion at the Mission Road area, but cautioned against knocking down the permafrost overhang because it acts as insulation for the ground behind it. Mr. Barber suggested that the overhang be left in place until the toe was more secure. Mr. Barber concluded by stressing that DOT was working as hard as possible with the tools available, and complimented the Corps and Red Samm for their response.

Ken Hitch, Corps of Engineers, stated that the Corps engineers were checking with other experts for their suggestions for the project. Mr. Hitch stated that the Corps' main concern was maintaining the structure already in place, i.e. the Dock and the seawall. Mr. Hitch then left the meeting.

Mayor Wintersteen read Resolution #95-39, which is attached as part of these official minutes, and opened a Public Hearing, asking for input from the audience.

Stuart Greydanus, Port Director, relayed the concern of citizens about a sinkhole that formed behind the seawall. Mr. Greydanus stated that he had taken soundings at that point, and no scouring had occurred.

Barbara Bunte, Bethel, stated that she appreciated the City holding the meeting. Ms. Bunte stated that she had heard many opinions for solutions, including filling freezer vans with sand and then sinking them along the bank to form a wall.

Mary Durbrow, Bethel, addressed Council and stated she felt lucky that the intervention by the Corps may save her home. Ms. Durbrow suggested parking more barges in front of the

Mission Road area to stop the undercutting of the bank, adding that obstructing the flow of the river against the bank seemed to be the best solution. Ms. Durbrow concluded by adding her appreciation to the City and the Corps.

Richard Hancock, Corps of Engineers, cautioned the public to keep a safe distance from the erosion area, adding that people were driving and walking up to the edge of the bluff, not knowing that they were standing on an overhang that could fall at any time. Mr. Hancock addressed the idea of sinking freezer vans, stating that they needed to establish a stable base to place the vans on prior to sinking them.

Discussion followed regarding placing abandoned barges and cars in front of the Mission Road area.

Skip Barber, DOT, spoke against using abandoned cars, stating that even if they were crushed, they do not make good barriers, and created eddies of their own, sometimes making the problem worse. Mr. Barber pointed out that the problems with the Mission Road area were not due to the velocity of the water but the thaw of the permafrost. Mr. Barber recommended stabilizing the toe with rock or supersacks and then placing sand over the permafrost to halt the thawing and stabilize the area. Mr. Barber stated that sinking a barge to stop the wave action might work if the toe is stabilized. Mr. Barber stated that he was meeting with the Corps Monday morning to determine the strategy for the Dock and Mission Road area, and he recommended ensuring the cargo dock was stable and then placing resources in the Mission Road area.

Frank Richards, DOT, asked for Mr. Barber's recommendation to stabilize the Mission Road area. Mr. Barber suggested extended a breakwater as straight as possible from the end of the seawall and placing fill behind it. Mr. Barber added that the amount of rock needed to stabilize the Dock needed to be determined so that the resources available for the Mission Road area would be known.

Discussion followed regarding the reasons for thermal degradation, placing abandoned autos along the bottom of the bank and the possibility of using the barrels of tar.

Mary Durbrow, Bethel, expressed her concern about the focus on the Port and monitoring the Mission Road area. Ms. Durbrow stated she was uncomfortable with a monitoring period since they knew what the problem was, and that the time for intervention was now instead of waiting for more erosion. Mr. Barber agreed and clarified his meaning that the Port should be monitored after the work is performed to determine if it was stable.

Stuart Greydanus, Bethel, recommended building a base with the supersacks and then deploying an oil boom as a breakwater. Mr. Greydanus also stated that it would be very costly to excavate abandoned barges.

Katherine Arca, Bethel, questioned if any refrigeration devices could be used to slow the thawing of the permafrost. Richard Hancock, Corps of Engineers, replied that thermopiles could be used, but would be very costly.

Barbara Bunte, Bethel, asked how quickly the options could be explored and implemented, given the urgency of the problem. Richard Hancock responded that they would continue to build up the toe with the supersacks while looking at the other options.

Harry Faulkner, Jr., Bethel, commented on the need for a permanent solution and ways to improve the supersack-filling operation. Mr. Faulkner also stated that he had observed people on the edge of the Mission Road overhang, and asked the City to perform serious safety efforts to keep people away from the site, including installing a fence and monitoring the area more closely. Discussion ensued on the need for a regular patrol of the area.

Mayor Wintersteen closed the Public Hearing.

Council member McComas asked if anyone had investigated changing the flow of the river as it emptied out of Steamboat Slough. Skip Barber, DOT, replied that the Corps had looked at various means of controlling the water flow in its original design study and found that it would cost considerably more than the seawall project. Mr. Barber asserted that the main problem was that the seawall stopped the river from following its normal meandering pattern and it was fighting that by deepening its channel. Mr. Barber suggested the best solution to fight this would be to deepen the toe protection.

**motion** M/M by Miller to adopt Resolution #95-39. There was no second.

Council member Swanson questioned Mr. Barber on the integrity of the petro port. Mr. Barber stated that the latest soundings at the petro port indicated that no problems had occurred and there seemed to be no loss of material.

**motion** M/M by Miller, 2nd by McComas to adopt Resolution #95-39.

Mayor Wintersteen explained that, although there was a danger in declaring a number of disaster emergencies, the scope of the latest problem was greater than the first emergency. Mayor Wintersteen advocated declaring a disaster emergency so that the intent of the Council was clearly understood.

Skip Barber stated that he spoke with the Governor's office on this issue and he sees no reason why the Council should not pass it. Mr. Barber added that the Governor has the capability to request federal funding if necessary, and encouraged the Council to adopt the resolution.

**vote** Poll vote on the motion. Motion carried, 5-Yes, 0-No.

**motion** M/M by Miller, 2nd by McComas to direct the City Manager to make available all City equipment and operators as appropriate, using his discretion and consultation with experts. Poll vote. Motion carried, 5-Yes, 0-No.

Council member Chris asked that some daily reporting method be established to keep the public informed.

**motion** M/M by Miller, 2nd by McComas to direct the City Manager to establish a reporting schedule to begin at the regular Council meeting and make the reports available to the public. Poll vote. Motion carried 5-Yes, 0-No.

**motion** M/M by Miller, 2nd by Chris to direct the City Manager to establish a fenced barrier around the area that is a hazard, perhaps to include access to Mission Road, and to authorize overtime for the Police Department to enforce no trespassing in the area.

**motion** M/M by Miller, 2nd by Swanson to amend the motion to direct the City Manager to establish a safety perimeter working with the Corps and the contractor.

Main motion and amendment withdrawn.

**motion** M/M by Chris, 2nd by McComas to direct the City Manager to work with the Corps and Redd Samm to establish a safety perimeter as the best see fit. Poll vote. Motion carried 5-Yes, 0-No.

Council member Chris asked that the updates posted daily. Mayor Wintersteen requested that they be provided to the City Clerk to distribute.

Discussions followed on the personnel that would be in Bethel for the Corps and DOT, and the schedules for future reports from the two agencies.

**IV. ADJOURNMENT**

**motion** M/M by McComas, 2nd by Chris to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 p.m. Voice vote, Motion carried unanimously.

PASSED AND APPROVED THIS 1ST DAY OF AUGUST, 1995.

  
Allan Wintersteen, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
Connie Tucker, City Clerk