
City of Bethel, Alaska

City Council Minutes

October 22, 2002

Regular Meeting

Bethel, Alaska

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Bethel City Council was held on October 22, 2002, at 6:30 p.m. in the council chambers, Bethel, Alaska.

Mayor Short called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Comprising a quorum of the Council, the following were present:

Stanley "Tundy" Rodgers	Joy Shantz
Hugh Short, Jr.	Andrei Jacobs
David Trantham	
Carl Berger	

Excused absence(s): Jerry Drake

Unexcused absence(s): none

Also in attendance were the following:

Bob Herron, City Manager
Colleen Soberay, Acting City Clerk

PEOPLE TO BE HEARD

Boy Scouts of America presented their comments on the needs of the community. The information was presented in three separate groups.

James Jorgenson, as speaker for the group stated that the community has a need for a recreational facility. The following are the reasons why the facility was chosen:

- More opportunities for the youth of community during the summer and winter to play sports all year round
- By having a facility that was open year round, it would give the youth a chance to compete against teams in Anchorage
- The recreational facility would give the youth a chance to exercise daily
- The facility would provide jobs and a community meeting space
- The facility could house a gym, workout area, aerobics, and recreation room, an area to practice summer sports during the winter, a swimming pool, a theatrical room for plays and movies, and a walking/running track on the outside

The following were four ideas to pay for the facility:

- Fundraisers
- Grants from local, state, and federal organizations
- City of Bethel budget
- Donations from the public

Justin Crow, as speaker for the second group stated that the community has a need for paved roads. The reasons are as follows:

- A reduction in dust
- Reduction in respiratory illnesses
- Less vehicle repairs
- Bethel would look cleaner

Mr. Crow further stated that in order to meet the need for paved roads the Public Works budget would need to be supplemented.

Kyle Emry, as speaker for the third group represented the idea of how the police department is currently funded and what should continue to be funded:

- Implementation of the CSO program
- Alcohol control – helps with the reduction of criminal acts
- Central point to control alcohol
- Community policing – encouraging officers to be out of their cars and into the neighborhoods
- Preventive policing

Council Member Jacobs invited the Boy Scouts to attend the Community Strategic Plan to be held on November 7, 2002 at 7:00 p.m. at the Cultural Center.

Members of council thanked the Boy Scouts for input and effort. Council members encouraged to continue to present their ideas before the council.

Jeff Sanders voiced his concerns over snowmachine access and the water and sewer pipes that may interfere with the access. Mr. Sanders believes that the City is at a point in which it is time to be more proactive to protect existing, and allow for more snowmachine access roads. Mr. Sanders gave history of the traditional trails which he believes should be marked as permanent trails. Further, Mr. Sanders suggested that the trails be regulated by the City of Bethel.

Council Member Rodgers stated that he spoke with Osborne Construction regarding the issue and was assured that Osborne Construction would be providing access to the traditional trails by placing ramps over the pipes.

Mayor Short directed Administration to investigate the matter further.

Yolanda Jorgenson voiced her concern regarding the condition of the floor in the Public Works building. She further stated that included in the annual budget was \$30,000.00 to repair the floor. She questioned whether the floor had been fixed.

City Manager Herron stated that the \$30,000.00 is not enough money to completely repair the floor and will be used to provide stop-gap repairs. He further stated that to do a complete repair would take a significant amount of money. City Manager Herron informed the council that he would look into the state of the floor immediately.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED BY:	Berger	To approve the amended minutes of the 10-8-02 regular minutes
SECONDED BY:	Jacobs	

Council Member Drake's absence was listed as excused due to his work schedule.

VOTE ON MOTION	Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.
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APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOVED BY:	Jacobs	To approve the agenda as amended
SECONDED BY:	Rodgers	
<i>Item E – Appointing an Ex-officio Student City Council Member was added under New Business</i>		
VOTE ON MOTION	Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.	

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Short explained Bonding Proposition B and Proposition C. Proposition B proposes \$1.48 million to pave Ptarmigan Road. Bonding Proposition C provides millions of dollars for the region to repair and construct schools. Mayor Short encouraged voters to vote for the propositions.

Items included in the Mayor's report:

- Recognition of October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- Newsletter from Governor Knowles office re: Accomplishments including rural water and sewer projects
- Press release from Governor Knowles office re: Continuing allocations for the Western Alaska Community Development Quota
- Newspaper release re: first of several Community Strategic Planning meetings
- Letter from Mark Ames re: civic public interest for Centennial Pioneer Park

Mayor Short requested that a letter of support be sent to Mark Ames regarding the name change – Centennial Pioneer Park.

MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT

City Manager Herron's report included the following:

- Announcement that all scheduled road projects have been completed
- The announcement that Lt. Governor Fran Ulmer and State Senator Loren Lemman were in Bethel on October 9, 2002. City Manager Herron spoke with both candidates on issues related to the Community of Bethel
- A report on personnel matters within the City of Bethel
- Summary of pending meetings
- A report of the City Manager's travel status
- Request for consideration of a Community Policing concept
- Report that City Manager Herron will be the representative to the Resource Development Council
- Update on the recent vandalism and apprehension of the suspects

City Manager Herron noted the Management team reports included in the council packet.

Paul Richards, City Lobbyist gave a report on the following items:

- Budget up-date including the primary objective of water/sewer and roads
- Up-date on the Bethel River Stabilization Project
- Communication with the commissioners of the DEC and the Department of the Transportation

Discussion ensued regarding the continuing resolution status, the ratio of requests granted, continuity of issues and representation, Chief Eddie Hoffman Highway improvements, the bike path, Village Safe Water, and a recreational facility.

Council Member Trantham asked that the draft Community Policing concept be forwarded to the Public Safety and Transportation Commission for review and recommendations be made to council. Members of council were in consensus with this request.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Senior Advisory Board

Council Member Berger reported that the senior advisory board had not met.

Parks and Recreation Committee

Council Member Jacobs stated that he will be forwarding a copy of the letter written by himself to the District Attorney's Office to the Parks & Recreation Committee.

Planning Commission

Council Member Shantz stated that the Planning Commission did not meet.

Port Commission

Council Member Rodgers reported that the meeting of the Port Commission was held last evening – October 21, 2002. Council Member Rodgers gave an overview of the meeting and stated that during the winter months, the meetings would be held at the City Offices.

Public Works Committee

Council Member Trantham reported that the Public Works Committee did not meet due to a lack of quorum and encouraged members of the public to attend the next meeting.

Public Safety and Transportation Commission

Council Member Drake was not in attendance.

Finance Committee

Mayor Short reported that the next Finance Committee will be held on Thursday, October 24, 2002 at 6:30 pm in council chambers.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Item A – Public Hearing – Ordinance #02-31: Amending sections of chapters 13.04, 13.08, 13.12 and 13.16 of the Bethel Municipal Code regarding water and sewer service

Mayor Short opened public hearing.

Rob Lewis stated that he is in opposition of ordinance #02-31. He stated that the origin of the ordinance is from the Finance Committee but does not believe that this is the intention of the Committee and would like it referred back to the Committee.

Gary Vanasse also voiced his opposition of the ordinance and reviewed the areas of concern. Mr. Vanasse encouraged council to reject the ordinance.

Robert Strahan, Finance Director for the City of Bethel passed out a matrix to show the losses in the water/sewer enterprise fund. Mr. Strahan explained the FY01 loss of \$279,455.00. Currently there is a projected net loss for 2002 of \$130,000.00. Mr. Strahan explained that the ordinance originated

due to the *practice* of vacation credits. He reiterated that the vacation credits were a *practice* and were not provided for in the Bethel Municipal Code.

City Manager Herron recommended that ordinance #02-31 be sent back to the Finance Committee for review. City Manager Herron explained that the current water and sewer delivery service is not a custom delivery service. He further pointed out that if a customer were to request custom routing that the service would cost more than the regular delivery service.

Jeff Sanders said that he does not agree that the stated average water and sewer bill of \$360.00. He believes that it is not accurate and is misleading. He also questioned the cost of the piped water project in City Subdivision.

Mayor Short directed the Finance Director to report at the next council meeting an accurate figure of the average water and sewer bill cost.

Mayor Short questioned City Manager Herron as to the costs of the current water and sewer projects. City Manager Herron stated that the contract was a bid contract and Osborne Construction stated that they could provide the service for approximately \$4.4 million. The next phase of construction would be an approximate cost of \$3.3 million. City Manager Herron stated that those costs would be available at his office.

David Martins opposed ordinance #02-31 and believes that the routes should be specialized for individuals needs.

Mayor Short closed public hearing.

MOVED BY:	Rodgers	To send ordinance #02-31 to the finance committee for further review
SECONDED BY:	Jacobs	

VOTE ON MOTION	Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote.
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Item B – Public Hearing – Ordinance #02-33: An ordinance authorizing the disposal of a ten acre parcel within the surface estate of the southwest quarter of section 8, range 71 west, township 8 north, seward meridian, to Yuut Elitnaurviat-People’s Learning Center, Inc.

Mayor Short opened public hearing.

John Dickens voiced his support of the ordinance and believed the property to be a down payment toward the people of Bethel. He believes that in the donation of the land it would send a message to the rest of the state of Alaska that we are serious in our support the people of our region.

Deborah Samson, registered nurse with Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Center stated that she was in attendance as a representative of YKHC and Gene Peltola, President and CEO of YKHC. Ms. Samson read the following letter written by Mr. Peltola into public record:

Dear Council Members:

I am writing to endorse the Yuut Elitnaurviat or People’s Learning Center land donation of 10 acres adjacent to the Bowling Alley. YKHC has been an integral partner in the formation of the 501c(3) formation of Yuut Incorporated and fully supports the efforts of the partner agencies to become a single voice for economic development, education of our people, self-determination in the region. I have never seen this level of collaboration around a single project in our region.

Senator Stevens has endorsed the Yuut Elitnaurviat project through federal appropriations and continually working with the consortium to overcome challenges. Additionally, this project enjoys

strong support from Governor Tony Knowles, who said, "This is the right thing, in the place, at the right time." The State of Alaska appropriated \$900,000 toward the project in 2002.

This mission of tracking high school students into health careers is greatly needed in the region. Additionally, the community college aspect of Yuut in the first and second year of university will greatly increase our ability to 'grow our own' health care professionals, with an emphasis on nursing and community health aides. Currently we have vacancy rates of 30% to 40% in nursing positions within the corporation. This is driven by a nationwide shortage of nurses and limited regional capacity of our residents in the profession. Because of this, we are forced to hire outside professionals on short-term contracts and on temporary basis at a very high cost; these are payroll dollars that could stay in our economy, but instead escaping to the outside.

Additionally, we have 196 budgeted positions within YKHC for Community Health Aides, the vital link for the entire region to local healthcare. This CHA's are important to the overall health of the region, but also add significant dollars to the regional economy, which centers on Bethel.

The donation of the ten acres under discussion would provide a three-fold benefit to the City of Bethel:

1. Increase the tax base of the City of Bethel through the construction of a regional training center with a student population of over 200. The additional jobs, payroll, and tertiary benefits will be immense for the city coffers.
2. Increase the employment pool of qualified workers in construction, education, health care and aviation. All these areas currently depend on outside talent to complete the jobs. Through local residents trained in mid to high paying jobs, economic dollars will increase that are spent in Bethel.
3. Regional partnerships through the Yuut project will bring increased coordination and project development that will continue to grow Bethel and solidify itself as the economic, cultural, and geographical center of the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to support the partnership of Yuut Elitnaurviat. You have an opportunity to bring Bethel and the regional to a new level of economic growth and education – please join YKHC in this honorable and worthy investment in our future. –Signed Gene Peltola

Janelle Vanasse, Executive Director of Yuut Elitnaurviat stated that she was in attendance to urge the council to support the ordinance. Ms. Vanasse gave an overview of the project and the history of the project. The following topics were presented Ms. Vanasse:

- The worthiness of the project
- The need to grow our own people and to not rely on importing employees from the "outside"
- The need to invest in alternatives for the education of our youth
- Economic development opportunities
- The participation of the partners in the project

Ms. Vanasse pointed out the critical need for the donation of land by the City of Bethel. Further, she stated that without the donation of the land, the project will not become a reality.

Ms. Vanasse read the following letter into public record:

Dear Ms. Vanasse,

I am writing this letter in support of the construction of the People's Learning Center Campus. In the past years the Kuskokwim 300 Race Committee has used the tundra behind the Bowling Alley as a back-up starting area for the K300. The race committee realizes that this space maybe used to construct the Learning Center Campus. The Kuskokwim 300 Race Committee is in full support of your efforts. Please contact me if you have any questions. –Richard Gannon K-300 Race Manager

Willy Keppel stated that he was in full support of the project and stated that the ordinance as presented was out of order because it did not come through the Planning Commission.

Hoppy Whitman gave an overview of the project and stated her pride that the City of Bethel is willing to partner on a project that will further the citizens of Bethel.

Bill Ferguson, Lower Kuskokwim School District Superintendent asked that the following letter be read into public record:

Dear Council Members,

I am writing in support of the donation of 10 acres of land to Yuut Elitnaurviat. The City of Bethel has the opportunity to join eight other partners in making a significant contribution to the people of the region.

As the local school district, LKSD is dedicated to pursuing quality education for the youth in the region. Yuut Elitnaurviat is a unique opportunity for us as a school district to partner with other agencies to create an educational alternative that would not be possible without region wide support and partnering. I think the same is true for the City of Bethel; this is a unique opportunity for you as a municipality to make a significant change in the lives of people through partnering and joining resources. We along with other partners have made significant commitments to the long-term operation of the center, and your donation of land is critical in getting this project to the operational stage.

Additionally, Yuut Elitnaurviat will be an asset to the City of Bethel. The operation of the center will itself bring jobs to the city, and the program promises to increase the number of local people qualified to fill local jobs. Local people filling local jobs will have exponential effect on the City's economy.

Without the generous donation of land by the City of Bethel the Yuut Elitnaurviat project will not be able to move forward. I urge you to participate in this joint effort the betterment of our community and the services to our youth. –Signed by Bill Ferguson, Superintendent of Schools

Starr Jensen, read the following letter into public record:

Mayor, City Council Members and Community Members:

I am glad to have this opportunity to speak about the need for the Yuut Elitnaurviat Center. As some of you may know, Bethel Alternative Boarding School (BABS) is part of the Yuut Elitnaurviat project. BABS seeks to recruit and work with students between the ages of 14 and 19 who have dropped out, have substance abuse problems, or are at risk.

If you have ever visited our school – you know why I'm here. Our building is very limited in it's function as a school. We only have open classrooms, no gym and are limited in our enrollment due to the building's size. We have many more students apply than we can accept due to the facilities limitation. Our dorms are usually at full capacity and students from the villages that are accepted have to find housing in Bethel until dorm space comes open. There are many more students who need a program like BABS than there are programs to serve them. In one village, I was told they had 27 drop outs.

Our students succeed and are challenged to achieve their full potential here – they also learn works skills that carry over into careers. This facility would allow for a more intensive training center with adult mentors for the students and would allow for an easier transition from high school student to adult career tracks.

We need a program for the students too old to attend our program. We often have adults ask us if they could apply to BABS but they are over 19 with very few credits. They are encouraged to go to the Adult Basic Ed Dept at KUC to get their GED. We need a place where youth mothers/parents/families can live while in school or in training. We have it difficult for our young mothers to live away from their babies because they don't have a place to live in Bethel with their babies. They leave the babies with a relative in the village while they come to BABS.

The students also ask frequently about getting a gym. As you know, the facilities for recreation around Bethel are limited. We have been fortunate to be able to use the Lulu Herron Bldg., and KUC for our Yuuraq and ivory carving. The Yuut Elitnaurviat multipurpose building has the possibility of serving the community as well as BABS.

Anything we can do to curb substance abuse, increase education and skills of our young people, provide for employment, etc., benefits Bethel, the Delta, all villages and the State of Alaska. This plant represent our proposed school – YE project – the leaves are the students and community members. The pot is the YE building structure and the dirt is needed for the plant to grow. We ask that the City of Bethel support this project by donating this land, represented by the dirt, for the building of the People’s Learning Center. We are a team – an acronym for Together Everyone Achieves More.

Ms. Jensen also read the following letter into public record:

Dear Bethel City Council Members,

I regret not being with you this evening to speak out in support of a very important project, the People’s Learning Center. My name is Daniel Cooley, and I am currently a teacher at Bethel Alternative Boarding School, which will serve as the model for the People’s Learning Center. Over the past two and a half years as a teacher in the Lower Kuskokwim School District, it has become clear that many students need an alternative to the school programs within their home village. The new People’s Learning Center will be one of those alternatives. Just as BABS has, it will incorporate a hands on active on the job training program, and will include classes in vocational fields so that graduates will be best prepared to take advantage of the many job opportunities in the area and throughout the state. As many of you are well aware, BABS has been meeting this need for students for the past four and a half years, and this new program will expand on that success.

It is critical that we provide for the educational needs of our children and young adults, as well as those older adults looking for the vocational skills to find a good paying job in Bethel and beyond. This large contribution by the City of Bethel is absolutely critical to this projects success, please be a partner with us in securing the future of Alaska’s children and young adults. –Signed by Daniel Cooley

Bob Angaiak, Economic Development Planner for AVCP conveyed AVCP’s support of the Yuut Elitnaurviat project. AVCP envisions that the project will not only benefit Bethel but the entire Yukon Kuskokwim region. The project has been integrated into AVCP’s Community Economic Development plan for the region. Mr. Angaiak believes that Yuut Elitnaurviat will help provide a level of self-sufficiency for the people of the area.

Cliff Andrews has previously been employed as a vocation teacher and believes that Yuut Elitnaurviat is an exciting and vital project. Mr. Andrews believes that the students of the region are very talented and currently do not have the opportunity to use and develop their talents. Mr. Andrews stated that he was astounded that there are no applicants for the positions within the City of Bethel and believes that there would be applicants if the Yuut Elitnaurviat Center was in operation.

Gary Vanasse reiterated that the cooperation level with Yuut Elitnaurviat is amazing. Mr. Vanasse recommended that a professional appraisal be done on the proposed property and voiced his support.

City Manager Herron clarified the statement made that the City is not following the proper process for the donation of land. City Manager read section 4.08.10 “the city shall have and may exercise all rights and powers in the acquisition, ownership, holding and disposal of any interest in real property not prohibited by law. Any sale, lease or exchange of city land shall be approved by the city council by ordinance after consideration has been made by the planning commission.” City Manager Herron reiterated that there is not a reference to a sequence of events.

Mayor Short closed public hearing.

MOVED BY:	Jacobs	To set for public hearing ordinance #02-33 on November 26, 2002 and forward to the Finance Committee and Planning Commission for review
SECONDED BY:	Berger	

Council Member Rodgers recommended that a deadline be put on the review by the committees and commissions. He stated that it is time to get the project underway.

Council Member Trantham agreed that an official appraisal is essential and that a true legal description be established. Council Member Trantham reiterated the need to forward the project to the Planning Commission and the need for a new resolution from the Commission.

With council concurrence Mayor Short suspended the motion to read the following two letters into public record:

Council member Berger read the following letters:

Dear Mayor Short and City Council Members:

Bethel Native Corporation (BNC) is a partner agency in Yuut Elitnaurviat (the People’s Learning Center.) The City’s effort to make approximately ten (10) acres of land available for the construction of this facility is very commendable.

There are two sites under consideration. The first, located near the bowling alley and the second, located near the AVCP Housing. Either of these sites would be conducive to a learning facility.

From a historical perspective, it may help in your deliberations to note that Bethel Native Corporation (BNC) originally received this land as part of its Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) entitlement. It was ultimately reconvened to the City of Bethel under the provisions of ANCSA Section 14(c)(3) to the City of Bethel to be used for “community expansion and other foreseeable community needs.”

The development of a People’s Learning Center is certainly an appropriate use of these lands. – Signed by Marc Stemp, BNC CEO

Dear Council Members:

I’m writing in support of your donation of the 10 acres of land to the Yuut Elitnaurviat Partnership. This donation is the dominant in-kind donation that is allowing us to secure and leverage other state and federal dollars. The construction and operation of Yuut Elitnaurviat will provide a major economic boost to the city of Bethel in many areas.

By your consideration and approval of a land site selection closer to roads/utilities, our partnership will not only be one step closer to ground-breaking, but the cost savings to us should result in a larger facility. –Signed by Bob Medinger, KuC Campus Director

City Manager Herron clarified why the official land title was not drawn up before public comment was received. City Manager Herron went to explain his appraisal of the property. He stated that the value of the land is at approximately \$900,000.00 to \$1.3 million.

Janelle Vanasse explained the process which was used to give an unofficial appraisal of the donated land.

VOTE ON MOTION	Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote.
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NEW BUSINESS

Item A – Discussion Item – Public Works Committee recommendation of utility service consolidation

City Manager Herron explained the purchase of the Caselle system within the Finance Department and states his belief that with the new system in place, the Finance Department will have the ability to function at a higher rate. City Manager Herron, the Finance Director, and the Public Works Director concur that it would be a mistake to remove the billing services from the Finance Department.

Council Member Trantham requested that City Manager Herron's recommendation be sent to the Public Works Commission. City Manager Herron stated that he and the Finance Director would draft a memo stating their recommendations.

Rob Strahan, Finance Director reiterated City Manager Herron's recommendation and further stated that the finance department is working with the public works department to improve services.

Discussion ensued regarding the costs of Caselle, the benefits and tangible results.

Item B – Introduction – Ordinance #02-34: Adding a new chapter to Title 4 of the Bethel Municipal Code entitled "Revenue and Finance" regarding disposal of property in the police department's possession

Ordinance #02-34 was introduced under the consent agenda and set for public hearing November 26, 2002.

Item C – Introduction – Ordinance #02-35: Designating approximately 9.5 acres of the area commonly known as the "sand pit" as a third city cemetery site and relating to the process for surveying city cemeteries

Ordinance #02-35 was introduced under the consent agenda and set for public hearing November 26, 2002.

Item D – Discussion Item – Task Force on Youth and Crime

Mayor Short reviewed the recent youth crime in the city of Bethel. Mayor Short asked that a Task Force be implemented by which Chief Executives of public agencies and State agencies become involved by appointing two people from their entity to the Task Force. Public meetings would be held, goals would be established and through inter-agency cooperation the issues would be addressed.

Council Member Jacobs stated his support and read the letter written by him and addressed to the District Attorney's Office.

Discussion ensued regarding the entities involved as well as the logistics of the meetings.

Item E – Discussion Item – Appointment of Ex-officio Student City Council Member

Council Member Jacobs gave a brief history of the Ex-officio Student City Council Member and asked what the process would be to include one.

City Manager Herron stated that he would research Title 29 and may introduce an ordinance at a future council meeting after input from the students at the Bethel Regional High School.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

Council Member Berger encouraged everyone to vote and let their voices be heard.

Council Member Shantz thanked the partners of Yuut Elitnaurviat who were represented. Ms. Shantz stated her desire to hear from all of the partners involved.

Mayor Short read the statistics from the police department and reiterated the heavy call volume received by the police department.

Council Member Jacobs encouraged members of the council and public to attend the Community Strategic Planning meeting on November 7, 2002.

Council Member Drake *was not present.*

Council Member Trantham thanked the members of the public for their recommendations and comments.

Council Member Rodgers encouraged everyone to prepare for winter and to wear a PFD.

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED BY:	Berger	To adjourn the meeting
SECONDED BY:	Rodgers	

VOTE ON MOTION	Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.
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With no further business before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 9:20 pm.

APPROVED THIS 26th day of November 2002.

ATTEST:

Hugh Short, Jr., Mayor

Janette Persinger, City Clerk