

SPECIAL MEETING

Transportation, Finance, and Public Works Committees

Discussion: Road Use Fees

June 19, 1997, 7:00 p.m.

Attendees: Transportation Commission - Doreen O'Brien, Thor Williams
Finance Committee - Agnes Phillips, Clint Schink
Public Works Committee - Mike O'Brien, Gary Vanasse
Others present: Clair Grifka, Terryl Miller, Wayne Smith, LJ Warren

Doreen O'Brien chaired the meeting, and started by stating the reason for the meeting. The topic of road use fees has been referred by the City Council to each of the Committees present. A joint meeting of the three committees makes more sense than having each committee meet separately.

Currently, there are a number of out-of-town construction companies in Bethel, running heavy equipment on the roads. Ms. O'Brien posed the question of whether the City should have some type of road use fee, and asked for input from all present.

Vanasse: Questioned if a road use fee would generate enough funds to pay for collection of the funds. Noted that the City's own water, sewer, and refuse trucks are the worst offenders. Should the City pay any road use fees that are enacted?

M. O'Brien: Stated that regulation wouldn't be very difficult. A simple sticker could be issued when people paid the fee, the same process used for issuance of small boat harbor permits. The sticker would be good for a year. The public relations issue would be a little tougher to handle.

Williams: Questioned how the fee should be structured. Perhaps based on gross axle weight - this would compensate for the difference between delivery vehicles, and heavy equipment.

Vanasse: Pointed out that heavy trucks do much more damage than pizza delivery vehicles. The substandard roads pose a problem.

Discussion followed on various regulations, such as hours of operation, no hauling during breakup, and requiring contractors to return roads to pre-construction condition. Ms. O'Brien noted that Nome, Dillingham, and Kotzebue simply use the State's regulations, but they're not built on sandpads. Perhaps Bethel needs a different set of regulations.

Discussion turned to dust control. Acting Public Works Director Clair Grifka stated that effective dust control will be expensive. Calcium chloride washes out after a few days of rain. Watering lasts less than an hour. The City is acquiring a hydroseeder, which can be used to seed the sides of roads, which should help.

SPECIAL MEETING

Transportation, Finance, and Public Works Committees

Discussion: Road Use Fees

June 19, 1997, 7:00 p.m.

M. O'Brien: If the Streets and Roads Division were established as an enterprise fund, all road use fees collected could be applied to the fund, and used for dust control, repairs, and paving. Even a small amount of paving each year would help.

Williams: Agreed with the idea of an enterprise fund.

Vanasse: Disagreed with the idea of an enterprise fund. The fund would never break even. However, the City does need to raise revenue to use on the roads. The questions are How? and How much?

M. O'Brien: Keep the process simple. Information can be obtained from the Department of Motor Vehicle on registered vehicles - and the un-registered heavy equipment would be easy to count locally.

Terryl Miller: Described road watering practices in his village in Thailand. Taxis shouldn't bear the total cost of road improvements and dust control.

Schink: Pointed out that road use fees would probably only add \$25K-30K to the City's revenue, which isn't very much compared to the work that needs to be done. It wouldn't even pay for a person to monitor and enforce the fees.

Smith: Noted that Chuck Willert, Streets & Roads Foreman, has only 3 men working for him, and old equipment. His workload continues to increase. Regardless of the amount collected, any funds raised should be put into the Streets & Roads Div.

Warren: Recalled that two years ago the legislature considered a bill which would allow municipalities to increase the amount collected by the State when owners register their vehicles. A portion of this money is already kicked back to the City. Will investigate to find out how much we could increase.

Schink: Suggested a 3-4 year frontage foot tax, with all funds going into the Streets & Roads Division. Mr. O'Brien noted that a frontage foot tax would essentially be a property tax, and would require voter approval.

The meeting came to a close, with the following action items:

- Doreen O'Brien will look at what the State is currently charging per GVW on the highways.
- LJ Warren will find out about the 1996 legislation allowing cities to increase registration fees.
- LJ Warren will talk to the City Attorney about an eventual ordinance to enact road use fees.