MEETING NO. 2011-06: The Special Meeting of the City and Borough of Juneau Assembly, held in the Assembly Chambers of the Municipal Building, was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Mayor Bruce Botelho.

I. ROLL CALL

Assembly Present: Jonathan Anderson, Mary Becker, Karen Crane, Ruth Danner, Bob Doll, Merrill Sanford, David Stone and Bruce Botelho.

Assembly Absent: Johan Dybdahl.

School Board Members Present: Marc Choate, Ed Flanagan, Kim Poole, Andi Story and Barbara Thurston.

School Board Members Absent: Phyllis Carlson, Sally Saddler.

Staff Present: Rod Swope, City Manager; Laurie Sica, Municipal Clerk; Craig Duncan, Finance Director; Glenn Gelbrich, Superintendent of Schools; Laury Scandling, Assistant Superintendent; David Means, Director, Administrative Services.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS – None.

III. SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

A. Joint Meeting With The Board Of Education To Discuss School Board Issues.

Andi Story thanked the Assembly for its continued support of the school district’s programs and funding needs. She thanked Ms. Becker for her attendance at the school board’s budget meetings. It has been very difficult to plan without complete information on how issues will be resolved at the legislature.

Ms. Story distributed a handout “Quick Look: Juneau School District,” dated February 3, 2011. The Juneau School District (JSD) is one of the community’s largest employers with 780 employees. 404 are teachers. JSD is the 5th largest district in Alaska. The student population is 48% non-white, 23% Alaska Native, 20% are on free or reduced lunch programs, there are three Title 1 schools, and in 2010, 6 of 7 elementary schools met adequately yearly progress. Ms. Story also distributed a handout titled “Next Generations – High School Structure for Post-Secondary Success.” She said that JSD has 29 dual-credit agreements with UAS, so students can take a high school class and receive University credit.

Glenn Gelbrich said the district appreciates the partnership with the CBJ. He spoke about the work on the budget and said the current budget assumes the $100 increase in the base student allocation from the legislature, which has not materialized yet, and assumes continued full funding from the Assembly. They know those figures could change. They are trying to get improved results with fewer resources. The economy requires this, the stimulus money has ended and the $4.1 million reduction includes $2.2 million from the stimulus dollars. They
have adjusted for that loss of revenues. The FY12 budget adopted by the Board is $500,000 more than in FY11. We appreciate that the Assembly members have been forthcoming with questions to us and this helps facilitate communication.

JSD student achievement has been predictable for decades. It has been too easy to predict at an early age the student success. To change this, we have to do our work more carefully.

Mayor Botelho asked if this was a nationwide phenomenon or Juneau specific.

Mr. Gelbrich said nationwide it is clear that students from families with resources do better. In Juneau, it shows up in two different ways. One is that lower income students do not do so well, and the Alaska Native children are overrepresented within that income bracket. He said it is unacceptable to predict that type of achievement. We have many students that go to prestigious universities, but there are too many that do not graduate and get the education to obtain a job and support a family.

He highlighted a new program they have instituted called AVID. This is a program to help the students in the middle – it nudges them and tells them we expect more from them. So far, we are hearing good information from them. AVID is a program that has been around for 30 years internationally. The program teaches students to take “Cornell” notes that are used in college, they use a Socratic dialogue to answer their own questions, learning how to research and plan for college. These are students that would have been taking regular classes – not advanced placement – and they are taking this class and are expected to be in an advanced placement or honors class. The teachers know which students are in the AVID elected class and have specific expectations of the students. These students have a plan for college and also a plan for how to pay for college.

He spoke about instructional coaches for teachers in each school. This is a non-supervisory role to assist teachers plans for meeting student’s needs across the spectrum.

There is a leadership development program to help staff learn to take on leadership roles. JSD has hired four principles in the last 2 years, and predominantly they have been from outside the district. The cost is small, but investing in our local people will pay dividends.

The budget is based on money that is not in the bank. They are hoping the legislature looks at forward funding. They did some planning with forward funding. They are committed to only implementing programs with years of demonstrated effectiveness.

Mr. Sanford said JSD has always had dedicated people working to the best of their ability. When will the graduation rate improve?

Mr. Gelbrich said the Board expects to see results at the end of this year, and if not this year, then it will be next year. He believes JSD can deliver on a promise of what public education should be. If this cannot be done, then JSD may not have the right superintendent.

Mr. Doll asked what attracted the new principles to this community or system. Mr. Gelbrich distributed the JSD “2010-2014 Strategic Plan.” Mr. Gelbrich said that they shared a belief in the plan JSD has for the district and they believe in a higher standard for our students. They all have families with them. He believes every child can learn and it is their duty as leaders to support that work in such a way that the kids will learn. The CBJ Assembly and the
community have demonstrated a commitment to getting things done for kids. Mr. Gelbrich said he was told to be cautious about looking for people wanting an Alaskan experience, but to look for those who are truly here for the kids. Once they are here, we hope they enjoy their surroundings.

Mr. Doll asked if the legislature does not come through, what would happen. Mr. Gelbrich said they will understand the outcome of the session on April 18 or 19 and will review the budget. They will bring proposals to the community on ways to pare the budget further for the year ahead and the Board would bring the budget back to the Assembly for adoption.

Ms. Danner asked Mr. Gelbrich if he felt the district was at a tipping point for improvement. Mr. Gelbrich said yes. There has been tremendous feedback from the community during the “100 days of listening,” in which strengths and weaknesses were identified. If we set higher standards and believe they can achieve more and are intentional about the instructional methodology used, we can get there. He spoke about an analogy of talented teachers rowing in different directions. They are seeking more alignment on core standards.

Mr. Stone asked about career technical educational and said he is concerned about programs for those students who do not plan to pursue a four-year degree. Mr. Flanagan said progress has been made to provide more opportunities and put more value on the career/tech program. JSD hired a career tech coordinator, Karen Smollen. There are after school programs and they would like to expand the JDHS house building class. There was an apprenticeship fair at UAS tech center that demonstrated to the students what is available.

Mr. Gelbrich spoke about looking at the overall system and seeking efficiencies. For example, there are some processes that have required several signatures to accomplish a goal. Staff is looking at designating authorities to streamline these processes. They are also looking at student registration, and the current requirement to fill out bundles of paper every year. They would like to have students register once and only make changes when needed. They are looking at on-line registration and perhaps providing computer kiosks if there is not a computer in the student’s home.

Ms. Crane said if there are decreases in the dropout rate in a year or two that will be incredible. The march to dropout starts at the beginning. What is being done to get the children started on the right path?

Mr. Gelbrich said JSD is working with two preschool projects and an integrated pre-school with special needs students with federal funding and some students, which pay tuition. Anecdotally, they have positive information on these programs. JSD also has two schools with full day kindergarten that is doing well. At Auke Bay Elementary, some students come early and some stay later, so the class is smaller at a portion of the day and we see positive results from this as well. Ms. Scandling has looked at programs with United Way and we are open to ideas.

Ms. Crane said math and literacy are being aligned, and asked why science is not mentioned. Mr. Gelbrich said it is not, yet, and not everything we do is listed in the strategic plan. AVID is not mentioned on the strategic plan and it will make a fundamental difference. We are serious about science. The instructional coaches are competent in math, literacy, science, and technology.
Mayor Botelho asked about the pushback the School Board felt on raising the graduation requirements, which indicates there is not alignment in the community – how will we get there?

Mr. Gelbrich said he hears the comments that not all students are geared to college and that is true – post secondary learning is the key – whether it is college or the military, trades, and the work world. The idea is to set your sights higher. The requirement for a foreign language was one pushback and that raised questions. We had resistance to the proposal, but also a great deal of support to move forward. They will continue this public discussion following the budget discussions. The commitment to higher expectations is worthy and getting agreement on what those expectations are is the goal. Mayor Botelho said high quality reasoning and problem solving are important.

Mr. Sanford supports mentoring and hiring from within at the school and at CBJ. This will increase longevity in the community.

Mr. Means distributed preliminary budget information to the Assembly and said the official budget would be transmitted to the Assembly on March 31. This budget anticipates a $100 increase to base allocation from the legislature. They looked at planning forward several years into the future and he referred to the enrollment projections provided by David Reaume.

Mr. Anderson asked how the district has done over time in estimating enrollment and Mayor Botelho said the Assembly impression is that it seems that we consistently overshoot the target. Mr. Means said it has varied, some years overshooting, other years undershooting. He said he would provide the Assembly with his analysis on what Mr. Reaume has provided, the target chosen and the actual enrollment; however, he did not have the information with him.

Mr. Means explained a budget sheet titled, “JSD Projected Foundation and CBJ Appropriations, FY2012 to FY2015 with FY11 Actual.” He said the number of intensive needs special education students is reduced, which brings in less funding, but there are still services that are required for the students who have special education needs that are costly but do not meet the definition of intensive. Mr. Means and Mr. Gelbrich expanded on the definitions of special education students, the services and costs of those students. Other reasons for increases in the budget included the end of stimulus funding and increased employee costs.

Mr. Means clarified that Dr. Reaume’s enrollment figures only include K – 12, however, Mr. Means includes pre-schoolers as they qualify for funding. He said that one intensive needs student was equivalent to 13 students for a dollar value of funding provided for their education.

Mr. Means reviewed the preliminary budget proposed on January 18, 2011 with the board-approved budget on March 15, 2011, showing the increases and decreases made based on significant public discussion. He reviewed FY2012 budget highlights. The budget they are seeking is $91,018,847. Mr. Means showed the fund breakdown of operating funds, grant funds, special revenue funds and school activity and house building funds.

Mr. Means explained a document called “Summary of Funding Requests from the City and Borough of Juneau – FY2012.” As of March 15, 2011, JSD’s budget request from CBJ is $25,556,800 for General School Operations, $570,000 in requests outside the cap, $200,000
from Roaded Service Fund for activities, for a total of $26,326,800 in funding, which Mr. Means said was $292,200 less than what was approved by CBJ for FY12.

Mayor Botelho asked what the dollar gap would be in terms of local participation if JSD does not get the anticipated funding from the legislature. Mr. Means said it would be roughly an additional $260,000 funding request.

Laury Scandling thanked the community for its intense support for kids. JSD is a steward of public resources and needs to make a strategic investment. They have data that shows the graduation rate has increased over the last five years from 65 – 70%. Standards are not what they ought to be but JSD is meeting or exceeding standards. JSD is making investments in Pre-K programs. They have different students every year and needs always change. The $100 BSA is not a bail out. They have made energy conservation savings but operational costs continue to increase. They are not seeking extra; they are making savings and are staying stable.

Kim Poole said JSD is trying to get to the goal of every student graduating and capable of making a living, stay in Juneau if they want, go on to trade school or college, and at least not make a mass exodus. We want to keep students in the community. This superintendent has helped us articulate our goals clearly. The method to get there is not prescribed, but we need to help our instructors understand our goals, and give them instructional help to get there. People say public education is failing, but we are all products of the system and we are not failures. She praised the AVID program. A local hire program is a goal, but there are also times that fresh eyes are helpful to break out of molds.

Ed Flanagan said that he missed the High School Education Task Force meeting at which there was a lot of push back. Brian Holst was a good advocate for the business community and there was a lot of feedback from them. He spoke about a credit recovery program that helps students make up credits, which did a study on the task force’s work, and those students that were in danger of not graduating all came around to supporting a higher standard in JSD. This is very encouraging to hear it from the students.

Andi Story said there was some realignment of staff and a director of curriculum position was created without adding additional staff. The director of curriculum looked at the standards and is moving to high standards. It does not matter how many credits you require to graduate if you do not have rigor. We are doing an early release next year and we know this causes hardships for parents, but this gives staff the ability to do the research and improve instruction. JSD is also promoting kindergarten readiness skills and encouraging parents to help get their children ready to learn.

Mr. Gelbrich said that they are saying they are clarifying targets, supporting teacher development, and creating a culture that assumes improvement. We do see the Assembly as a partner.

Mr. Choate said Laury Scandling and he are co-chairing the task force to increase graduation requirements. Children will live up to our expectations, whatever we set. The Board agrees that Juneau should have one of the best schools in the country and this is possible with the current staff and support. Quality teachers and quality administrators will impact the system. We have to challenge ourselves and each other not to stay in a comfortable rut but to measure ourselves and strive to do better. The district is working hard to do this, it is quite
uncomfortable and there is push back. Juneau has the means, and the message has to come from everywhere in the community, not just the school. I am just beginning to learn and it is exciting. We can set this example for our students. It will not be easy and we were warned by the superintendent – but as a community, we can set high standards.

Barbara Thurston said as a new board member she has been learning a lot, quickly. We hear about pushback, we hear about higher expectations. The pushback is on the details, not on the concept, though, and she is feeling more optimistic.

IV. ASSEMBLY COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Crane appreciates the time people at JSD have taken to help her understand the issues.

Ms. Danner also thanked the board and appreciates setting higher standards and the confidence this shows in the children. She appreciates the efforts that are being made.

Mr. Anderson appreciates the attention to the deferred maintenance account. He is interested in hearing more about the anti-bullying policy. He asked if JSD anticipates a school bond issue on the 2011 ballot.

Mr. Means said the Board will review the CIP list at its next meeting, and a preliminary answer is that they have heard an informal request from the Assembly that the voters may need a break, so may wait a year for any more school projects on the ballot.

Mr. Doll liked the idea from reducing signatures required to accomplish a task. This requires an ability to tolerate “screw ups.” Long signature lists are evidence of insecurity. If the leadership is willing to accept mistakes, it will work.

Mr. Stone thanked all the board for their service and the superintendent makes things exciting. He said he thought he should go back to school for one more round.

V. ADJOURNMENT – 7:22 p.m.

Signed:___________________________ Signed:_______________________________
Laurie Sica, Municipal Clerk    Bruce Botelho, Mayor