

Retired Public Employees of Alaska
Southeast Chapter
Minutes of November 12, 2020

President Benda Knapp called the meeting to order at 10:04 on a Zoom conference session. The agenda was included in the meeting announcement and was approved as presented.

The minutes of the October meeting were posted on the SE Chapter page of the state RPEA website. Sam Trivette moved to approve the minutes as written. Kim Metcalfe seconded the motion and it passed unanimously

Mike Notar gave the financial report. We have \$2138.29 in the bank. He also said that our quarterly allotment from RPEA would go to the RPEA Legal Fund. Sam Trivette moved to accept the Treasurer's report. Kim Metcalfe seconded and the report was accepted.

Ms. Knapp introduced our quest speaker, Juneau Mayor Beth Weldon, speaking about the impact the COVID epidemic is having on the Juneau economy. Hospitality is the portion of the economy that has been hit the hardest. Sales taxes are down an estimated \$34 million. The Assembly has approved programs for rental assistance and housing assistance grants. Travel Juneau is working to attract the independent traveler.

The City has helped fund the purchase of a machine for processing COVID test samples. It should be at the hospital on December 7th, and will make testing much faster than sending it out to labs in Anchorage. Airport testing has been paid by the State.

In the prior fiscal year, which ended in September, we ended up slightly in the black. However, in the current quarter, we anticipate a deficit of \$2 million and we will be drawing down our reserves this fiscal year. The cruise lines are predicting that they will get some ships moving next summer, and hope to be back in full operation in 2023. Greens Creek was quarantining its workers in Juneau hotels, which resulted in bed tax income for the City. There was no passenger fee income, but there was still \$2.1 million in debt service on dock improvements and other expenses for passenger services. The City is working hard to make sure the Legislature physically meets in Juneau. We don't want the precedent of a virtual legislature.

COVID cases in Juneau are mostly cluster-related – incidents where groups of people are infected in the same event.

The epidemic has been particularly hard on the homeless population. The Glory Hall can only accommodate 16 people a night and has had to close its day shelter, which puts people out on the street during the day. The Armory is still being used as an overnight shelter and Centennial Hall is used as a quarantine facility. The City estimates there are 96 unsheltered persons in Juneau, and many of them are suffering from mental health problems as well. Rainforest Recovery Center is adding beds.

Ms. Weldon also reported on progress on the assisted living facility planned for the Vintage Park area. The City has bought the land so that the developers can pay the City over time. They are currently working on getting the necessary building permits and should start construction in spring, 2021. The City has approved a direct grant and tax abatements. There will be 80 units, with 34 for memory care, and some eligible for Medicaid recipients.

Ms. Knapp thanked Ms. Weldon for her presentation and Sam also spoke his appreciation for the tremendous amount of work being done by the Assembly and City staff during the crisis.

Ms. Knapp gave the Chairperson's Report. Duncan Shackelford is the new Communications Director at RPEA and will be sending a monthly newsletter to the membership. The Legal Fund is being drawn down and needs donations. The RPEA website has a link to the Executive Board meetings and members can attend through Zoom. She noted that this is the Open Enrollment period for retirees in the Dental/Visual/Audio insurance program, and members can change programs if they choose. Seasonal flu shots given at a pharmacy are fully covered by retiree insurance, and are highly recommended this year.

Cindy Spanyers gave the Legislative update. Votes are still being counted, but it appears a number of incumbents are losing their seats. The certification of the election will be November 25. Sam Trivette reported how APEA and AFT have been instrumental in building RPEA and have contributed funding in the past. We need to foster those alliances, and it doesn't appear that there is any effort to do that, and Cindy concurred. Kim suggested that we should also reach out to ASEA. Also RPEA should make a greater effort to recruit new members. Brenda said she would voice those concerns at the next EB meeting.

Brenda indicated that perhaps we should not meet in December. She will announce her decision.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35.

Respectfully submitted by
Alan Davis, Secretary