Three Assemblymembers Sue Borough

Friday, 06 June 2008

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/080606.boroughlawsuit.mp3{/audio}

Jay Barrett/KMXT

Three members of the Kodiak Island Borough Assembly, Tom Abell, Reed Oswalt and Louise Stutes, are now suing the borough, seeking reimbursement for their legal fees and for damages in the aftermath of the Mel Stephens lawsuit. Borough Manager Rick Gifford announced the lawsuit at Thursday night’s assembly meeting.

-- (Lawsuit 1 30 sec “… attorneys for the plaintiffs and the defendants.”)

Abell, Oswalt and Stutes all hired their own attorney when Stephens sued the borough late last year over excessive absenteeism by Assemblywoman Sue Jeffrey. They have stated that they did so because they did not agree with the borough’s stance that Jeffrey did not miss too many meetings.

After a judge ruled in Stephens’ favor and ordered Jeffrey removed, the borough paid its attorney, Matt Jamin, and just recently paid Stephens for the legal fees the judge awarded him. However, attempts by Abell, Oswalt and Stutes to have their attorney paid have been caught up in parliamentary procedure for months. Mayor Jerome Selby vetoed the latest attempt, and the assembly could not muster the votes necessary to override it.

The borough will have to seek different representation in new lawsuit. As the manager explained, Jamin will be unavailable:

-- (Lawsuit
2 13
sec “…
for representation and will advise the assembly.”)

Assemblywoman
Pat Branson appealed to her colleagues to continue to seek payment without
suing:

-- (Lawsuit
3 30
sec “…
without attorneys getting involved.”)

However
Assemblywoman Chris Lynch took a harder line, and called on the public to speak
up on the issue, and file a recall petition if they feel any assembly members
are out of line.

-- (Lawsuit
4 26
sec “…
I encourage the public to come forward.”)

None of the three assembly members who are suing the borough mentioned the lawsuit at last night’s meeting.

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