Assembly Meeting Preview

Thursday, 18 September 2008

Jay Barrett/KMXT

The Kodiak Island Borough Assembly will take up what could be the last element in the year long Mel Stephens attendance law suit at tonight’s regular meeting. The assembly will also approve its state project wishlist and consider funding the bed and breakfast association.

An ordinance paving the way for assembly members to hire their own attorneys if sued is scheduled for a final vote tonight. But if it is postponed, it won’t be the first time. The ordinance has been ready for an up or down vote since June 19th, when it had a public hearing, but was postponed then, and again on August 7th and September 4th.

The ordinance would allow assembly members to get their own lawyers if they don’t agree with the position of the borough’s attorney. That happened when former assemblyman Mel Stephens sued the borough last year, and three assembly members hired an Anchorage lawyer. It took them months to arrange payment for him.

The sticking point some assembly members have with the ordinance before them is that it would require preauthorization of payments by the assembly as a whole.

There will be only one public hearing at tonight’s meeting. That will be on the Kodiak Area Coordinated Transportation Plan, which is needed to secure continued state and federal funding for KATS (cats), the local bus system. The assembly will then vote on whether to support the plan, which was prepared by Assemblywoman Pat Branson.

The assembly will also vote on distributing some of its bed tax revenue to the Kodiak Island Bed and Breakfast Association. The borough has almost 16-thousand dollars available in its tourism development fund, but the assembly will have to determine how much, if any, to give to the bed and breakfast association. The organization is fairly new, and this is the first time the borough has considered giving it money for promotion of bed and breakfasts in the borough.

And, the assembly will vote on its state capital improvements wish list tonight. The top two items are identical to last year’s: Seismic upgrades to borough schools and money for a new fish and game headquarters on Near Island. The legislature approved four million dollars for seismic upgrades earlier this year, but the entire amount was vetoed by Governor Sarah Palin. New to the list is a 23-million-dollar request to offset a portion of the 115-million-dollar costs for a new high school.

The assembly meeting starts at 7:30 tonight, and will be broadcast live here on KMXT.