'Transparency' Act Passed by Assembly

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Last night the Kodiak Island Borough Assembly approved an ordinance that seeks to make borough operations more transparent. The revision in borough code will require the borough manager to notify the assembly about contracts between the borough and assembly members or their immediate family. Assemblyman Tuck Bonney spent the last few months revising the code with Assemblywoman Carol Austerman, and encouraged fellow assembly members to adopt the changes.

Assemblyman Mel Stephens said there were parts of the ordinance he agreed with, but ultimately he would vote against the revised code.

The contract Stephens is referring to was between the borough and Kodiak Construction Services, a company owned and operated by Assemblywoman Chris Lynch. In October, the contract between Lynch and the borough raised questions among some assembly members about conflict of interest, but based on past borough code the borough attorney deemed the contract legal. Bonney had been a firm advocate that the issue was with borough code and not a particular contract. This led Bonney and Austerman to work at revising the code, resulting in the ordinance that the assembly passed during last night’s meeting.

In other assembly news, Borough Manager Bud Cassidy’s contract was approved in a five to one vote. Cassidy has been serving as acting borough manager since June and recently agreed to take on the position permanently. Stephens voted against the contract and said it wasn’t an issue with Cassidy, but certain clauses in the contract itself.

The assembly also approved its revised state legislative capital improvement projects priority list for the 2013 legislative session. Last month assembly members met with Representative Alan Austerman and Gary Stevens to discuss the list. The Kodiak legislators didn’t shy away from suggesting the assembly take a second look at its list and consider the size, scope and amount of projects it hoped to submit to the legislature. The assembly did just that and Cassidy presented a report on the revised list.

There are ten items on the new list. The CIP list will go to the state legislature where it will compete for state funding.