Rezone Passes Assembly, Likely to Come Up Again

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

A rezoning ordinance was passed by the Kodiak Borough Assembly on Tuesday, but just barely. During the meeting the assembly held a public hearing regarding the rezoning of land on Shannon Point in Womens Bay. The rezone would switch the land from residential back to industrial. Majority of the surrounding area is industrial.

During the public hearing a handful of concerned citizens spoke against the rezone, including Sid Pruitt. Pruitt said he felt the overall goal was to build a new cargo dock in the area.

“You got before you a planning and zoning that they want to rezone it for storing stuff. I’ve got an application to the Corps of Engineers where they want to put in a dock, three acres fill, and do a ramp that would lay down so that they could put a dock in. And take freight out here, freight in and out. Basically what I think they’re going to do is take APL’s freight, which is the gravy that Horizon Lines is getting right now, basically keeping them in business.”

Other folks who spoke expressed concerns about the ecosystem of Womens Bay and increased traffic on an already busy stretch of roadway.

Assemblywoman Carol Austerman said the ordinance only deals with the rezoning of the property, and not whether or not to allow a dock.

“I will say that I agree with a lot of comments that were made tonight about the safety and ecological concerns about more development at this particular location. But, as far as a vote on the zoning, I will be voting yes to change the zoning back to where it was, as it does fall within our comprehensive plan. The place to make the decisions about what is actually going to be constructed out there would be through the Army Corps of Engineers. And that is where I would hope our community would give public comment and make sure to get your messages across about the safety and ecological concerns.”

Assemblyman Aaron Griffin said he wouldn’t support the rezone, primarily because the area is not covered by a fire district.

“At this point in time I cannot support adding industrial projects to an area that isn’t going to be covered under any even rudimentary fire service. And until they get that figured out I will always be against this.”

When the matter was put to a vote, the assembly was split. Assemblywoman Chris Lynch, Austerman and Assemblyman Mel Stephens favored the rezone, while Griffin, Assemblyman Tuck Bonney and Assemblywoman Louise Stutes were against it. Assemblyman Dave Kaplan was absent. The mayor is charged with casting tie-breaking votes, which is exactly what Mayor Jerome Selby did.

“Well unfortunately while I do have the concern about the traffic and I think that we do need to take a close look at that with the state, but in terms of borough code and zoning ordinances, there’s nothing that says this should not be rezoned, and the planning and zoning commission is correct, so I’m going to vote yes.”

Following Selby’s decision, Assemblyman Tuck Bonney asked to change his vote so he could be on the prevailing side. That change allows Bonney to ask for the matter to be reconsidered at a future meeting. This means that, despite passing on Tuesday, the rezoning ordinance will likely come up again.