

## Assembly Favors Road Improvements on CIP List

Friday, 04 October 2013

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/131004.boro\_cip\_passed.mp3{/audio}

Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Last night the Kodiak Island Borough Assembly passed its state legislative capital improvement projects priority list for the 2014 legislative session, but it was a different list than the assembly saw two weeks ago. During assembly discussion Assemblyman Mel Stephens moved to amend the list, bumping the number six item to number three, and letting the other items change accordingly.

Number six asks the state for \$5 million to put toward service area road paving and improvements.

“I make that motion because I basically agree with the comments of Scott Arndt and Dennis Symmons concerning the priorities here. I think service area road and paving improvements should be a higher priority than they have been in the past. I think they benefit a greater portion of the people than some of the other items that were above number six on this list.”

One of those items asks for \$500,000 to look at extending public utilities to swampy acres. The project would be a public/private partnership and cater to the possibility that additional Coast Guard housing could be built in that area, which currently has no water or sewer lines. Stevens said he is against that project, which was originally number three on the CIP list.

Assemblyman Aaron Griffin, however, said that should remain on the list because it is intended to help offset some of the housing problems here in Kodiak. He said the one complaint he hears consistently from Kodiak community members is the high cost of housing.

“By placing this study so high on our list this is our attempt to get in front of that. We are trying to address the fact that there is a lack of open land that has access to public water and utilities that could be easily developable into a high density housing that would be affordable to our middle to low income residents. Quite frankly there isn’t a whole lot out there now, there isn’t anybody who is making less than six figures who could hope to buy a home that’s worth living in. Unless we take proactive action to make this happen it won’t happen.”

Assemblyman Tuck Bonney said he agreed with making the service district roads higher on the list, and felt the money would be better spent on paving local roads.

“The road going out to Monashka, I forgot where I was but I was talking to some people and I

made a special trip out there because they told me the roads were so bad. And the roads were really bad. They're bad enough I'm amazed that the school buses can get through there sometimes with the pot holes and stuff. While I do support both projects I do think the service district area is more important to me personally than the swampy acres project.

Assemblywoman Carol Austerman said she supported the change, which would bump the swampy acres project down to number four. She said the project should definitely stay on the CIP list because, like Griffin, she felt it would help solve some of Kodiak's housing problems.

"The only way that we can actually get something done is to do something. And if we continue to just put things off and wait, wait, well maybe someone else will do something first, I don't think that's the way for us to address the problems that we have in this community. We have to take some sort of step forward. So I'm very much in support of having this on our CIP list."

The first two items on the list are the Phase III of the Kodiak Landfill lateral and the Monashka Bay water and sewer project feasibility, planning and design. The borough is requesting \$3 million and \$500,000 from the state for those projects, respectively.

The list will now be sent off to Governor Sean Parnell and Alaska legislators for the 2014 legislative session.