CH2M HILL On Thin Ice With Borough

Tuesday, 12 November 2013

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/131112.boro_ch2m_hill.mp3{/audio}

Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Frustrations between the Kodiak Island Borough Assembly and the design and engineering firm CH2M HILL continue to mount.

“I’m getting to the point where I’m tired of approving change orders for a company that I really honestly just don’t trust anymore.”

That’s Assemblyman Aaron Griffin expressing his frustration over the most recent hiccup in CH2M HILL’s work for the landfill expansion project. Borough Manager Bud Cassidy explains:

“As you know the bids for the wastewater treatment plant went out this spring and they all came in higher than the engineers estimate. We asked the engineer to go talk to those who bid to see what it was about our bid documents that made the bid prices come in so high. Based on those conversations we have modified the bid documents they will go out again in November and be opened in January. We’ll then know how much Phase III will cost.”

Griffin said it is frustrating to have to continuously go back and redo the work that CH2M HILL has done, costing the borough more money along the way.

“Here we are again dealing with CH2M HILL giving us an estimate on something that they should have had their hands around as the professional services contract that we’re paying them for and coming in with an estimate that looks like is several million dollars difference.”

Griffin said he’s at the point where he’s ready to take a look at who’s in charge of engineering at the landfill, and whether or not it should still be CH2M HILL. Assemblyman Mel Stephens, on the other hand, said he was beyond that point.

“And I am not willing to authorize the borough to incur any further debt for this project until I see a cogent and detailed explanation of where we started and how we got to where we are. I also feel the borough needs to start being straight with the people of this community about what is going to happen to their garbage prices, garbage fees, because of this particular thing.”

The discussion about CH2M HILL came up during Thursday’s regular meeting when the assembly was asked to vote on whether or not to apply for a loan from the Alaska Clean Water Fund for phase III of the

landfill project. Cassidy said the borough wouldn’t have to use the money, but just in case the new bids opened in January come back significantly higher than budgeted the borough should be prepared with some source of alternate funding.

Most assembly members agreed that applying for the loan would be worthwhile, but also expressed frustrations with CH2M HILL and the quality of work the company has done for the borough.

Stephens and Assemblyman Tuck Bonney voted against the loan, saying the borough needs to learn to say no and figure out how to get their hands around the landfill project.