

Assembly Members Will Take on New Boards, Committees

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

There will be some new borough assembly faces on various community boards and committees this year. Each year the borough mayor appoints assembly representatives to 16 local boards and committees, ranging from the borough's Architectural Review Board to the Kodiak College Council. This year newly elected Mayor Jerrol Friend decided to switch things up, and reassigned assembly members for 12 of those positions.

"And I preached this before when I became the mayor. You know, I heard several people call me and talk and leave messages and stuff and they felt comfortable on a board, that's a good reason not to be on there anymore because we need other people to find out what these boards do and that's what I really wanted to try to do. When I was on the assembly for six years I sat on two boards — the whole time. I don't have a clue of what these other boards do. And we have to make motions and move and make decisions on these boards and that's what I really tried to do, was to get people better informed of what these boards do. And that's how I came up with this list."

Assemblyman Mel Stephens agreed with Friend's idea to move assembly members around, even those who have served on the assembly and certain committees for multiple years.

"And I think that rotating these things and rotating essentially all of them except, as you point out, if something is in the middle of a project, I think that benefits the assembly as a whole by eventually leading to a more educated assembly. So that if you're on the assembly for three years you serve on three different main boards."

But not everyone felt that way. Assemblywoman Carol Austerman didn't think that was always a good idea.

"I actually disagree very much with that concept. I think that when you're on a board that you have been active in for a long time and you have taken the time and energy to learn everything that you need to know to be an effective board member, that switching that up every year makes it very difficult for you to be an effective member of that board, if you're constantly spending time learning about what the board is doing."

That being said, Austerman said she did feel that some boards are more involved than others, and could be reassigned annually.

“I have sat on the School Board Strategic Planning Committee for several years. They meet three times a year. It’s not a significant time investment, it is not something that carries over from year to year, it’s not a continuous process -- those are the kinds of boards and committees that I think it makes perfect sense to rotate people through. But if when you’ve got these significant boards that take relationship building and are important to our community and you have someone who wants to stay on that board, and a board that’s happy with that assembly member, I think that you should stay on that.”

Assemblyman Dave Kaplan said he understood the utility of rotation, but agreed with Austerman in that not every board or committee should be treated that way.

During Thursday’s special meeting the assembly voted to change two of Friend’s appointments. Friend had appointed Stephens to the Providence Health System Service Area Board, but the assembly voted to keep Austerman in that position. Likewise, Friend appointed newly elected Assemblyman Frank Peterson to the Kodiak College Council, but the assembly voted for Kaplan to remain on that council.