Borough, Council Consider New Fisheries Analyst

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

The city and borough have been without a fisheries analyst for more than three months now, but that might be changing soon. Last night the city council and borough assembly sat down for a joint work session and discussed the potential hire of Heather McCarty from McCarty and Associates.

McCarty comes from a broad background of fishing interests and experience, including commercial salmon fishing, aquaculture work and time as a lobbyist for the trawl industry. Her background in lobbying raised a few questions from members of the public last night, including former Assemblywoman Louise Stutes.

“Heather McCarty is nothing short of a well-documented lobbyist for both the processors and the trawl industry. And to bring her onboard with the idea that she will be an impartial advisor for this community is absurd. Ask yourself, can this individual protect the interests of all fishing sectors?”

Councilman Terry Haines said he shared some of those concerns about McCarty initially, but ultimately feels she is the best suited for the position. He said part of the criteria the city and borough looked for in hiring an advisor was experience with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, as well as Board of Fish and other fish governing bodies.

“And it’s very difficult for someone to be familiar with the council process and to be up with what the council is doing right now, without being currently engaged in the council process. And if you’re currently engaged in the council process, you’re probably doing it on behalf of someone.”

Haines said his hesitancy with McCarty has basically been put to bed.

“I don’t think we’re going to find anyone better qualified who is less conflicted to do this. And I really think that getting someone in place for us is very important right now.”

He said there are a lot of big discussions taking place with fishery management council and Kodiak needs to have someone on the ground to help keep the city and borough up to speed on issues that will affect local fishing groups.

Councilman John Whiddon said it’s also important to remember that the fisheries analyst won’t be lobbying for Kodiak, but rather gathering information and reporting back to the city and borough.

“And that whoever represents us and whatever the meeting is, if it’s a state or federal meeting, is going to represent us in terms of co elating, analyzing, collecting

information, reporting back to the fisheries work group. We didn’t allow or authorize Denby at anytime to go off on his own and march to the beat of his own drum. He was given clear parameters on how we wanted the community represented, which issues to represent. So if whoever we hire would be under the same constraints.”

McCarty spoke to the council and assembly via telephone last night, and said she didn’t feel like her background would prevent her from doing a proper job for Kodiak, and that ultimately any positions the city and borough might take will be up to the council and assembly.

“I think it’s important to,
for me, to understand the role that you want me to have in helping the community further engage in fisheries management issues. I think one of the key points is the decision making process at the community level. I think that I can report to you, and tell you all the things that go on and analyze their importance to the community of Kodiak, but on your end, I think the responsibility of community leaders, such as yourself, is to develop and maintain an really straightforward and transparent process of arriving at positions.”

McCarty currently works for Pacific Seafoods, but said she would terminate her employment with them if the city and borough decided to hire her for the analyst position. Both the council and assembly will need to approve any contract with McCarty. The fisheries analyst position is set to appear on the next regular meeting agendas for both governing bodies.