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THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Lisi Misa
being first duly sworn on oath deposes and says that she is a representative of the Anchorage Daily News, a daily newspaper. That said newspaper has been approved by the Third Judicial Court, Anchorage, Alaska, and it now and has been published in the English language continually as a daily newspaper in Anchorage, Alaska, and it is now and during all said time was printed in an office maintained at the aforesaid place of publication of said newspaper. That the annexed is a copy of an advertisement as it was published in regular issues (and not in supplemental form) of said newspaper on

Mar. 24, 30, Apr. 6/ 2023

and that such newspaper was regularly distributed to its subscribers during all of said period. That the full amount of the fee charged for the foregoing publication is not in excess of the rate charged private individuals.

Signed Lisi Misa

Subscribed and sworn to before

me this 7th day of Apr.

2023 Jada L. Nowling

Notary Public in and for
The State of Alaska.
Third Division
Anchorage, Alaska
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES
7/14/2024

Jada L. Nowling
ELECTRONIC NOTARY PUBLIC
STATE OF ALASKA
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES 07/14/2024

AMCO
APR 11 2023

FROM PAGE A1

SHELTER

Members took up the items on Wednesday night in a continuation of the prior night's regularly scheduled meeting.

Asked repeatedly by Assembly members about his intentions during the meetings, Bronson would not say whether he planned to follow through on the settlement payment by the Friday deadline.

But on Thursday afternoon, his office released a statement from the mayor saying his hands were tied.

"Based on the decision last night by the Assembly ... I am unable to pay the claim submitted by Roger Hickel Contracting, Inc for this project," Bronson wrote. "I hope the Assembly will work with us to settle this dispute as quickly as possible."

Assembly members have said they need to be part of discussions of any potential settlement with the construction company.

Wednesday's meeting was acerbic, with several Assembly members ripping into the mayor and administration over what they said was a "shocking" lack of detail or analysis on the legal liability involved in transferring millions of dollars for unapproved work. In the process of questioning where the March 24 deadline came from, no one from the administration knew whether it stemmed from an invoice or a formal demand letter.

"I expect more analysis and depth of thinking when we are presented with an invoice. I would want to see a demand letter laying out why they think they should be paid," Zaletel said. "This seems like very little rational basis for the purpose of cutting an over $2 million check."

Assembly Vice Chair Christopher Constant said he has major concerns about separation of powers if work can be green-lit by the executive branch and public money disbursed without the legislative branch ever weighing in.

"(Then) whoever is the mayor gets to write checks to his friends," Constant said. "We cannot allow the code to become dead letter."

For his part, Bronson said the settlement is a legal issue.

"This is a bill we have to pay. I'm kind of agnostic on the whole thing myself. I worry about the credibility of the city," Bronson said at the meeting. "We've been dealing with this for more than a month, and the lawyers are quite clear I'm obligated to pay this."

The administration's acting municipal attorney, Anne Helzer, who has been in the role for just four weeks, said Wednesday she had not yet had the "opportunity to review the historical side of things" on the proposed settlement.

"We've given notice that we'd like to pay the bill, and we don't want to turn this into a political event, if at all possible," Helzer said. "I wouldn't want to see the city incur unnecessary legal fees."

Both measures passed 9-2, with members Kevin Cross and Randy Sulte the lone votes against in both cases.

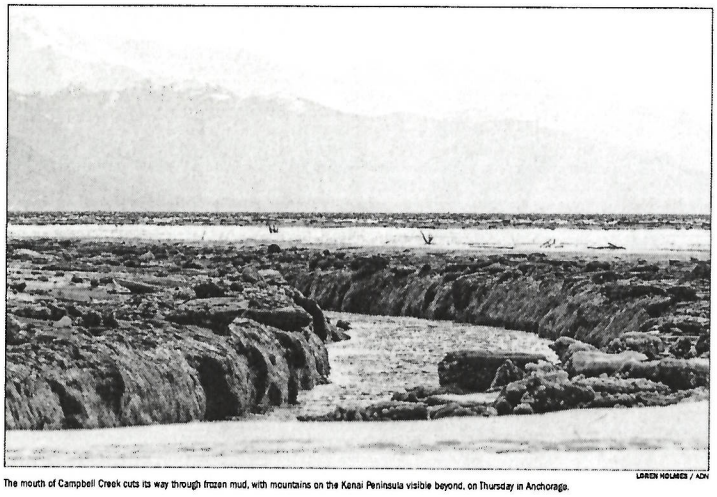
"It just kinda feels like it's more, 'How do we stick it to the mayor,'" Cross said of the resolutions. "I really wish we were focused on a solution. It feels like this is a step in the wrong direction."

But the majority of other members did not share that view.

"Frankly, I think the credibility of the municipality is at stake if the law is not followed," said Chair Suzanne LaFrance. "And the law says ... that the Assembly must approve the settlement before any payment is made."

An injunction was not a given: The measure created the mechanism for taking action in the courts, but would still need to be formally initiated by Assembly leadership. As of Thursday, no such injunction had been filed in court.

CAMPBELL CREEK SLICES ITS WAY THROUGH WINTER'S GRIP



LOREN HOLMES / ADN

The mouth of Campbell Creek cuts its way through frozen mud, with mountains on the Kenai Peninsula visible beyond, on Thursday in Anchorage.

FROM PAGE A1

WILLOW

runway" for the ConocoPhillips Alaska-backed Willow project to get to the development and production stages. Australia-based Santos is working with Repsol to advance the Pikka project.

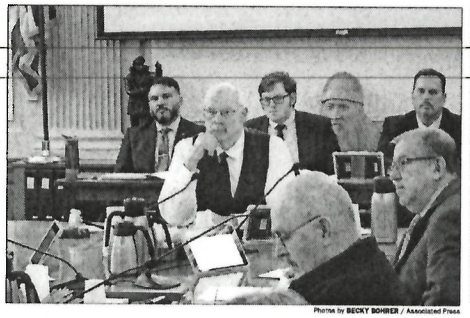
State tax officials on Thursday provided lawmakers an analysis of potential revenue impacts and benefits from Willow for the state treasury but noted uncertainty around the estimates, including when the project ultimately might begin, oil price volatility and industry costs.

North Slope oil prices, which were around $115 a barrel this time last year amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine, are currently in the $70-per-barrel range.

Dan Stickel, chief economist with the state Department of Revenue's tax division, told the Senate Finance Committee the oil and gas industry is a high-risk industry that requires considerable capital. He said the ability for companies to recover costs is a key consideration when they decide whether to invest, and that Alaska's tax structure has elements that support cost recovery. For example, the tax system allows for deductions related to investments and incentives for new production areas.

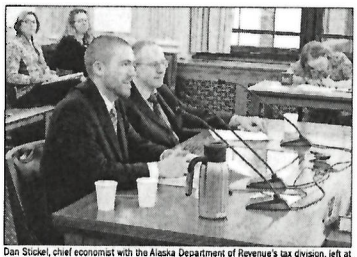
The state tax division's modeling indicated Willow could lead to billions of dollars in revenue for the state, North Slope communities, federal government and the company over the project's life, said Owen Stephens, a tax division analyst.

Oil has long been the state's economic lifeblood. Alaska political leaders — including Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy, the state's bipartisan congressional delegation and the Legislature — have pushed for Willow, in part seeing it as a way to boost the flow of oil through the trans-Alaska pipeline. Many leaders on the remote North Slope or with ties to the region have cast the project as economically vital for their communities. Unions have also spoken in support.



Photos by BECKY BOHRER / Associated Press

Alaska state Sen. Bert Stedman, center, a co-chair of the Senate Finance Committee, listens to a presentation on the major North Slope oil project known as the Willow project on Thursday in Juneau. The committee heard an update on the project from the state Department of Natural Resources and the state Department of Revenue.



Dan Stickel, chief economist with the Alaska Department of Revenue's tax division, left at table, speaks to the Senate Finance Committee as part of a presentation on the major North Slope oil project known as the Willow project on Thursday in Juneau. Seated next to Stickel is Owen Stephens with the tax division.

Environmentalists, however, have argued the project is at odds with President Joe Biden's climate pledges and worry it could lead to further development in the region.

Environmental organizations and an Alaska Native group have filed lawsuits challenging Willow's approval, arguing in part that the U.S. Bureau of Land Management failed to consider an adequate range of alternatives. A federal judge is expected to decide by early April whether to halt construction activities related to the project pending resolution of the cases, something the groups are requesting.

The approved project is smaller than what ConocoPhillips Alaska had earlier sought but the company said it welcomed the decision.

Rebecca Boys, a company spokesperson, earlier this week said the company was building ice roads for construction work but agreed to delay gravel mine activities until April 4, unless the judge issues a decision earlier than that denying the injunction requests filed by Willow opponents.

ConocoPhillips Alaska is intervening in the litigation in support of the federal agencies being sued over the approval. Arctic Slope Regional Corp., an Alaska Native regional corporation; the North Slope Borough; Kuukpik Corp., an Alaska Native village corporation; and the state have also intervened in support of the approval.

Willow could produce up to 180,000 barrels of oil a day and more than 600 million barrels over its 30-year life, according to the company.

FROM PAGE A1

TRUMP

"Neither fact is a legitimate basis for congressional inquiry."

The Republican chairmen of three House committees on Monday sent a letter to Bragg seeking information about his actions in the Trump case. The Republicans criticized the grand jury investigation as an "unprecedented abuse of prosecutorial authority."

The chairmen requested testimony as well as documents and copies of any communications with the Justice Department to be turned over by Thursday. The request came as Republicans in the House quickly rallied around the former president as a grand jury in New York weighs whether to bring an indictment against him.

"If a grand jury brings charges against Donald Trump, the DA's Office will have an obligation, as in every case, to provide a significant amount of discovery from its files to the defendant so that he may prepare a defense," Dubeck wrote.

The five-page response from Bragg's office provides a rare insight into what has remained a secret grand jury process, marking one of the first public acknowledgments that there is a sitting grand jury currently investigating Trump. The DA's office has adhered closely to centuries-old rules that have kept grand juries under wraps to protect the reputations of people who end up not being charged and to encourage reluctant witnesses to testify.

In proceedings closed to the public and members of the media, grand jurors listen to evidence presented by prosecutors and hear from witnesses. There is no judge present nor anyone representing the accused, and prosecutors do not have to offer any evidence favorable to the defense.

The disclosure comes as the grand jury appears close to finishing its work, after hearing last week from Trump's former lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen, but the timing of a possible decision on whether to charge the ex-president remains uncertain. Prosecutors canceled a scheduled grand jury session Wednesday and planned to hear testimony on other matters Thursday, according to a person familiar with the matter. But law enforcement in New York has been making preparations for any unrest, should Trump face charges.

The case revolves around hush money payments during Trump's 2016 presidential campaign to women who alleged sexual encounters with him. Bragg's team appears to be looking at whether Trump or anyone committed crimes in New York state in arranging the payments, or in the way they accounted for them internally at the Trump Organization.

On Thursday, one of the GOP chairmen, Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, expanded his probe into the handling of the Trump case by demanding testimony and documents from Mark Pomerantz and Carey Dunne, two former Manhattan prosecutors who had been leading the Trump case before quitting last year in a clash over the direction of the probe.

"Last year, you resigned from the office over Bragg's initial reluctance to move forward with charges, shaming Bragg in your resignation letter — which was subsequently leaked — into bringing charges," Jordan, an Ohio Republican, wrote in the letter to Pomerantz late Wednesday. "It now appears that your efforts to shame Bragg have worked as he is reportedly resurrecting a so-called 'zombie' case against President Trump using a tenuous and untested legal theory."

Requests for comment from Pomerantz and Dunne were not returned.

Vital Gardens LLC is applying under 3AAC 306.400(a) (2) transfer of a Limited Marijuana Cultivation Facility License #13503 dba Alaska Greenworks LLC located at 10263 Night Rd #7 Anch, AK 99515 United States.

Interested persons may object to the application by submitting a written statement of reasons for the objection to their local government, the applicant, and the Alcohol & Marijuana Control Office (AMCO) not later than 30 days after the director has determined the application to be complete and has given written notice to the local government. Once an application is determined to be complete, the objection deadline and application information will be posted on AMCO's website at https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/amco. Objections should be sent to AMCO at marijuana.licensing@alaska.gov or to 550 W 7th Ave, Suite 1600, Anchorage, AK 99501

Cannabis 49 LLC is applying under 3 AAC 306.300 for a new Retail Marijuana Store license, license #36633, doing business as Coastal Cannabis Company, located at 1900 Mineral Creek Loop Rd, Valdez, AK, 99686, UNITED STATES.

Interested persons may object to the application by submitting a written statement of reasons for the objection to their local government, the applicant, and the Alcohol & Marijuana Control Office (AMCO) not later than 30 days after the director has determined the application to be complete and has given written notice to the local government. Once an application is determined to be complete, the objection deadline and application information will be posted on AMCO's website at https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/amco. Objections should be sent to AMCO at marijuana.licensing@alaska.gov or to 550 W 7th Ave, Suite 1600, Anchorage, AK 99501.

Sublime Holdings, LLC is applying under 3 AAC 306.300 for a new Retail Marijuana Store license, license #35480, doing business as Serenitas, located at 1431 Muldoon Road, Anchorage, AK, 99504, UNITED STATES

Interested persons may object to the application by submitting a written statement of reasons for the objection to their local government, the applicant, and the Alcohol & Marijuana Control Office (AMCO) not later than 30 days after the director has determined the application to be complete and has given written notice to the local government. Once an application is determined to be complete, the objection deadline and application information will be posted on AMCO's website at https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/amco. Objections should be sent to AMCO at marijuana.licensing@alaska.gov or to 550 W 7th Ave, Suite 1600, Anchorage, AK 99501 and Attorney Jane Weldon, Esq. at jane@dwcounsel.com or 901 Photo Avenue, Second Floor, Anchorage, AK 99503.

AMCO
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ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY CANDIDATE Q&A

Do you support mail-in elections?

The Anchorage Daily News collaborated with Alaska Public Media on a candidate comparison guide for the 2023 municipal election for Anchorage Assembly and school board seats. The questions were developed with input from Anchorage voters. We edited candidates' responses lightly for things like punctuation and spelling, but otherwise let their answers stand. We think it's important for voters to see the full responses in order to make their own judgments on how to cast their ballots. Feedback? Email editor David Hulen at dhulen@adn.com.

Election 2023

NORTH ANCHORAGE

John Trueblood
No, I don't. Absentee, I do.

Nick Danger
No.

Christopher Constant
Yes! I am a strong supporter of vote by mail/vote from home. Turnout has increased every year since we implemented the system in 2018. Voters appreciate the convenience and flexibility the system provides voters. Our elections team runs free, fair and transparent elections and the voters have implemented it with gusto. Elections have become something of a political piñata for a faction in our community. But our elections are well run and vote by mail is good for everyone.

CHUGIAK, EAGLE RIVER, JBER

Scott Myers
No. While all voting systems have vulnerabilities, an all mail-in election is susceptible to greater tampering and fraud. This results in voter suppression, lower participation and concerns about election integrity. Anchorage should return to traditional voting while still maintaining the option for absentee by-mail voting.

Jim Arlington
Yes.

WEST ANCHORAGE

Brian Flynn
No.

Dustin Thomas House Darden
No. In-person hand count only.

Anna Brawley
Yes. Vote-by-mail has increased participation in local elections, while offering residents multiple options to vote: early voting, in-person voting and absentee voting for people who are out of the state or country during the election.

MIDTOWN ANCHORAGE

Travis Szanto
I support the will of the voters.

Felix Rivera
Yes. The system works and we've seen more people engage in the electoral process because of it. New changes proposed at the state level should make our process even better.

EAST ANCHORAGE

Leigh Sloan
No. Mail-in elections open the door to too much possible election tampering and election fraud. We have a major issue in our east-side area with a lack of confidence in the election system for good reasons. Long-term, I believe that mail-in voting discourages more people from voting than it encourages to vote. This lack of confidence, in turn, compromises the voice of the people.

Karen Bronga
Yes. Mail-in elections reduce barriers to voting. Being able to vote when it works for you just makes sense.

EAST ANCHORAGE

Spencer Moore
No. I respect that it is the process currently in place, but would like to see an in-person election with same-day results. It saves time, money and allows for greater transparency.

George Martinez
Yes.

SOUTH ANCHORAGE, GIRDWOOD, TURNAGAIN ARM

Rachel Ries
No, I do not support mail-in elections. It is an inherently flawed system in its current form. Too many opportunities for breaks in the chain of custody from voter to final ballot count. The first mail-in voting in 2018 increased election costs to over $1 million. This is double the cost of in-person voting prior. And costs have only increased. I do support a robust absentee ballot system where a mail-in ballot is requested by the voter.

Zac Johnson
Yes.

Mikel Issalaco
Yes; however, I believe that it is important to ensure that the mail-in voting system is secure and fraud-free. As such, I believe that more measures should be put in place to confirm addresses and opt-ins to prevent instances of fraud. In fact, I have seen instances where ballots were sent to the wrong people, such as past residents of a home. Situations like these can compromise the process and good faith of the people.

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE Q&A

Do you have areas of concern about student achievement in the Anchorage School District? What are your specific suggestions for improvement?

Dave Donley
Yes, reading, math and civics. See my website dave4asd.com.

Irene Bell
Our district struggles in many ways, such as with academics and other issues, including families stricken by poverty. To meet the needs of students and prepare them for life after school, we must invest in them. We need more qualified educators to fill the many open positions in the district. We need smaller class sizes so that the teachers we have can work more closely with the students who are struggling. We also need more school counselors per school who can work closely with students to provide them and their families with much-needed support and services.

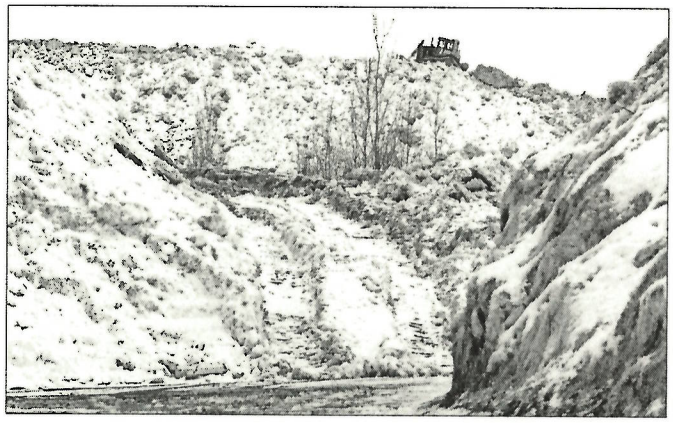
Andy Holleman
Like districts across the country, ASD has some standout success stories, but we struggle with students that are at a disadvantage. It can be a hard thing to fix in school because many of the factors that hold students back come from outside the school. I've been active personally in promoting ballot Proposition 14. I hope people will carefully consider it and realize it's a major step in helping more children show up for kindergarten with the basic skills to promote reading and math proficiency by working for better environments for our youngest children. I think we need to have more time in school for our students that are struggling so they can get additional help without being pulled from regular classes or electives, but that will mean transportation funds that we don't have right now.

We need to bring class sizes down.

We need more trained staff to support our students with the greatest needs.

Mark Anthony Cox
Our students aren't just statistics but representatives of their family's values, hopes and dreams. Taking time out of the regular school day to test them repeatedly and find out they are not proficient is not the way towards getting them to proficiency. We are all aware and can assess that we have had the greatest setback these past few years educationally, some of our students come from unsupportive backgrounds, and now we are ranked last in the nation for proficiency; we need to focus our efforts in giving back to the community and taking better care of our students. How important is graduation rate when the Anchorage School District has had a policy of automatically advancing students despite low to no proficiency? The method and quality of our education I would suggest should be our main focus.

MOUNTAINS OF WINTER'S MESS



A bulldozer pushes snow atop a large snow dump south of O'Malley Road, as seen from another snow dump on 104th Avenue, on Monday in South Anchorage.
LANDER HOLMES / ADN

Husband's secret Twitter account violates bond

AMY DICKINSON
ASK AMY

Q. Dear Amy: My husband of nine years has a secret Twitter account where he's been sexting other people, complete with exchanged pictures and videos. I confronted him about it, explained that it crossed boundaries I'm not comfortable with, and he promised he'd delete the account. A few months later, I noticed he'd been avoiding intimacy with me (again) and learned that he was back at it. I confronted him again and he apologized profusely, promising that he really would stop. But he still hasn't deleted the profile.

I feel betrayed and cheated on. It turns out that he wasn't just messaging other women, but also men. I asked him if that was something he wanted to explore. He's been very accepting about my own previous involvement with women (I'm bisexual), but he assured me that wasn't it. I'm wondering if he's possibly in denial about being bi-curious, due to his conservative family. I know he wouldn't be comfortable with me doing the same thing, and I have too much self-respect to stand for my boundaries being continually disregarded. How do I let him know that although I love him unconditionally, I intend to stay firm on my boundaries?

– Bi With a Guy

A. Dear Bi: You feel strongly about maintaining monogamy in your marriage. You and your husband agree that his secret sexting violates this monogamy bond. (His apologies and acceptance of your boundary indicates that he understands he has violated it.) Addiction can be described as self-harming and harmful behavior that interferes with a person's daily life, and in this sense, your husband is demonstrating that he has a sexual compulsion that is interfering with both of your lives (according to you, he avoids being intimate with you during periods when he is activating his secret Twitter account). You sound like an open-minded person. You have invited your husband to be completely honest with you, yet he seems unable to accept and fully participate in this level of intimacy with you. He would benefit from working with a counselor. He might be able to fully discuss his sexuality with someone he isn't married to and currently contemplating betraying. Because this crosses a line you maintain is inviolate, you might consider taking a trial separation while your husband works on his issues. You can love your husband unconditionally and support his needs and concerns without living with him.

Q. Dear Amy: I work at a food pantry in my small town. I have been volunteering since my retirement several years ago.

The other volunteers and I loved working there stocking shelves, packing boxes, etc. We are mostly older women and a few husbands have helped out with the heavier lifting chores. The director has done a wonderful job assigning chores and running the organization, so we worked like a well-oiled machine. In the last couple of years, several recently retired men joined us.

They all wanted to be the boss, changing the way things were done and in general added a lot of chaos to the environment with their foul language and arguing with each other.

The poor volunteer director, who puts in more hours running this organization than she would at a full-time job, is at her wits end. Do other charities have this problem with pushy volunteers? How should this be handled? The director is just a sweet little 70-year-old lady. Who knew there could be so much trouble with volunteers?

– Senior Volunteer

A. Dear Volunteer: My sense is that anyone who works with volunteers knows that it can be challenging. I suggest that you go to the director and report your concerns. She might write up a simple "contract" for all volunteers to sign, outlining basic responsibilities and expectations, and noting that anyone using foul language or engaging in conflict will be in violation and will not be welcome back. In terms of being bossed around by a bunch of newbies, I suggest that you find your own voice. You can respond politely, "Thanks for your input, but I'm going to use my own judgment here."

You can email Amy Dickinson at askamy@amydickinson.com or send a letter to Ask Amy, P.O. Box 194, Freeville, NY 13068.

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ANCHORAGE ELECTIONS

Early returns show strong support for bonds, ballot measures

Zachariah Hughes and Morgan Krakow
Anchorage Daily News

In preliminary ballot counts following Tuesday's Anchorage municipal elections, all bond proposals appear likely to pass, along with all but one ballot measure put before voters.

Election officials tallied 30,313 ballots on Tuesday and nearly 3,000 more the next day. The 33,309 ballots counted by Wednesday night represent just over 14% of registered voters. It is not yet clear how many ballots are outstanding, either because they have yet to be processed by municipal election officials or are still arriving through the mail. Last year, citywide, turnout was 30% in the April elections, which is in line with historical norms in Anchorage.

But returns from the first batches of ballots show ballot propositions winning approval by large margins.

Proposition 1, a $37,787,000 bond for capital projects at Anchorage School District facilities, had a roughly nine-point lead in "yes" votes. The bond package is focused on funding school security upgrades and roof replacements.

The proposal is significantly smaller than last year's failed $111 million school bond, and also marks a return to the district bonding on an annual cycle instead of its previous two-year cycle.

All the other area-wide bond proposals — including for public safety, fire protection, infrastructure as well as parks and recreation — appeared on course to pass, in some cases by wide margins. The roads and drainage bonding proposal, for example, currently has a nearly 24-point advantage.

Other ballot measures unrelated to bonds, including several technical changes to the city's charter, also appear likely to pass.

• Proposition 6, which would create a new service area to finance upgrades to infrastructure around popular Chugach State Park access points, has a 60% approval rate, with less than 40% of voters opposed. The measure is a mostly technical mechanism for potential future bonds and grants to do things like expand parking lots and roadways heading to some of the state's most heavily used hiking and recreational trails.

• Proposition 11, a charter amendment, switches the fiduciary responsibility of the $400 million Municipality of Anchorage Trust fund from the city's treasurer to a board, and is on track for approval by roughly the same margin.

• Proposition 12, a measure aimed at providing tax relief to property owners in the city, received 74% approval. The proposal follows state legislation that went into effect in 2022, and allows Anchorage homeowners to take up to 40% of the home's value up to $75,000, an increase above the $50,000 cap currently in place.

• Proposition 13 changes how the city holds special elections if an Assembly member or mayor leaves office before their term. That measure is the only one that appears headed for defeat, with 52% of voters opposed, and 48% in favor.

• Proposition 14, which would dedicate the cannabis sales taxes collected by the city to helping address Anchorage's lack of child care, was solidly ahead Tuesday night, with 57% approval.

Several other ballot propositions are specific to service areas in outlying parts of the municipality.

Ballots will continue to be processed by the municipal clerk's office in the days ahead, with results coming into clearer focus by week's end, though not set to be certified for another two weeks.

FROM PAGE A1

BUDGET

House Speaker Cathy Tilton, R-Wasilla, said that Wednesday's change of the fund source for the education boost was prompted when the minority proposed an amendment to have half of the $2,700 Permanent Fund dividend in the budget paid from savings. Support from minority members is needed to draw from savings, and they threatened to withhold it.

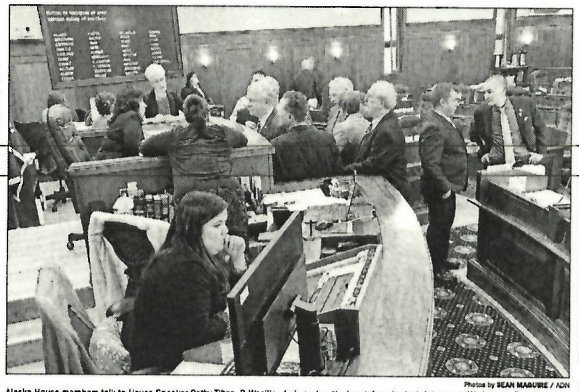
In response to the majority's amendment, 14 of 16 House minority members — mostly Democrats and independents — left the state Capitol in protest at noon, and did not return until 3 p.m.

Anchorage independent Calvin Schrage, the House minority leader, was one of two minority members to remain on the floor. He said he would fight for education and that drawing down Alaska's $2 billion Constitutional Budget Reserve — the state's main savings account — by roughly $600 million would be fiscally irresponsible.

The need for a draw from the Constitutional Budget Reserve, which requires a three-quarters approval vote by both chambers, is driven in part by the House majority's support for a $2,700-per-Alaskan dividend, which would cost the state $1.8 billion. Some minority members have argued in favor of decreasing the dividend size to $1,300 per Alaskan — an amount also favored by the Senate majority — which would allow the state to cover the education costs while avoiding the need to dip into savings. A proposal to shrink the dividend to that figure was solidly rejected by the House on Monday.

Minority members said Wednesday that the majority's measure would put them in a difficult position: While they opposed passing a budget that would draw hundreds of millions of dollars from savings, they would be unlikely to vote against an education boost that they say was named as a top priority by many of their constituents.

Tilton acknowledged Wednesday that the additional education funding was added to the budget because children and schools need a "little bit extra right now." But Palmer Republican DeLena Johnson, who manages the House's operating budget, said it was "prudent" that a school funding boost would come from savings, rather than the state's general fund, reasoning that the proposal was part of budget negotiations.



Photos by SEAN MAGUIRE / ADN

Alaska House members talk to House Speaker Cathy Tilton, R-Wasilla, during a lengthy break from budget debates on Wednesday. The House majority proposed tying a supermajority vote for the Permanent Fund dividend to an education funding boost, which sparked a walkout from the minority.

House Minority Leader Calvin Schrage, an Anchorage independent, was one of two minority members on the House floor during a dispute for how a boost for schools should be funded on Wednesday.

Majority members said that the draw from savings would incentivize lawmakers to continue working on a long-term fiscal plan to balance the budget, potentially with a new dividend formula and new state revenues. Agreement on such a plan has long evaded lawmakers since a drop in oil prices forced them to rely on revenue from the state's Permanent Fund to cover operating costs beginning in 2016.

The budget reserve may be a savings account, but it is also used to manage cash flow if there are state revenue fluctuations. State accountants have said that the fund should have a minimum of $500 million cash on hand, but that is not dictated by state law, and there are other options to cover budget shortfalls.

Johnson said Monday that it was "unlikely" a permanent school funding increase would be approved this year, and that discussions should continue during next year's legislative session.

After two days of largely smooth budget debates, the House majority's proposal to change the funding source for extra education spending sparked heated talk on the floor and sharp words between lawmakers.

Schrage said that education was being held "hostage" in budget negotiations, which led to an immediate backlash from majority members.

"I don't want to be called a hostage taker," said Dillingham independent Bryce Edgmon, a former House speaker who was a member of the previous bipartisan majority caucus with Schrage.

Schrage placed a call on the House shortly after his colleagues from his own caucus departed the building, a move by which lawmakers can legally compel their colleagues to return to the floor vote. The move forced Capitol security to search for the missing minority members, who had left the building for an undisclosed location and could not be found, forcing a long delay on the debate regarding school funding.

After a three-hour break, the minority caucus members returned to the House floor. Several, such as Anchorage Democrat Jennie Armstrong, opposed what she called the "scorched earth tactics" used by the majority, which earned swift rebukes from Tilton for impugning lawmakers' motives.

Anchorage Democrat Andrew Gray said the majority and minority had been working well, but he now felt forced to approve a larger dividend to get more funding for schools.

"It feels like we're trapped," Gray said.

North Pole Republican Mike Prax said it was "unfortunate" but budget negotiations in recent years have included a fight on the supermajority vote required to draw from savings. House Republicans, then in the minority, initially blocked using savings in 2019 to keep dozens of state accounts full during protracted budget battles.

On Wednesday, the House approved the plan to draw from savings for extra school funding on a 23-17 vote. All members of the majority voted in support and all minority voted against the amendment. They were joined in opposition by Wasilla Republican David Eastman, who doesn't sit with either caucus.

But the minority then introduced a series of previously rejected amendments to spend more from savings on state services. Those amendments were quickly tabled one by one, but the minority members' tactics forced an hour-long delay that culminated with the House adjourning at 6 p.m. Wednesday without taking the final needed vote on the education funding plan.

Tilton said after adjournment that she decided to end the session because emotions were running high and she hoped the overnight break would allow cooler heads to prevail. Schrage said there would be "a reset" for Thursday's floor session.

The spectacle of the education and budget fights on the House floor frustrated Anchorage School Board member Carl Jacobs. He wrote on Twitter that a decision by the majority to rescind their support for the simple $175 million education funding increase was "incredibly disappointing."

"Alaska's students are not political pawns. We are better than this," Jacobs wrote. He later said in a brief phone interview that he was "anxiously watching" the House proceedings this week that could determine the size and reliability of education funding.

Regardless of the outcome in the House, the budget can be significantly modified by the Senate, which is controlled by a bipartisan majority that is striving to write a budget without needing to draw from savings. Senate President Gary Stevens, R-Kodiak, said Wednesday he's "not happy about that at all" when asked about the House majority's decision to tie one-time education funding to the Constitutional Budget Reserve.

"That should not be a source to fund education," Stevens said.

In prior years, the minority has threatened to block drawing from savings for leverage until before the final budget vote — after the other legislative chamber has had its say. The Legislature is likely still weeks away from concluding its work on the budget.

Sen. Jesse Kiehl, D-Juneau, said of the House minority's actions Wednesday that it was "a little early to be turning up the heat."

Many lawmakers have flights booked to their home districts for the Easter weekend. Tilton said Wednesday evening that she still hoped to advance the budget to the Senate before then.

Sean Maguire reported from Juneau and Iris Samuels from Anchorage.

Vital Gardens LLC is applying under 3AAC 306.400(a) (2) transfer of a Limited Marijuana Cultivation Facility-License #13503 dba Alaska Greenworks LLC located at 10283 Night Rd #7 Anch, AK 99515 United States

Interested persons may object to the application by submitting a written statement of reasons for the objection to their local government, the applicant, and the Alcohol & Marijuana Control Office (AMCO) not later than 30 days after the director has determined the application to be complete and has given written notice to the local government. Once an application is determined to be complete, the objection deadline and application information will be posted on AMCO's website at https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/amco. Objections should be sent to AMCO at marijuana.licensing@alaska.gov or to 550 W 7th Ave, Suite 1600, Anchorage, AK 99501.

STERLING

Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Project
Project Number: 53014 / STP-F-021-2(15)
Public Meeting Notice

It's time for an update on the project! Please join us at the Public Meeting to learn about recent project updates and upcoming steps. This meeting will take place in person at the Cooper Landing Community Club. The project team will be available to answer questions and share updates via posters and maps.

Public Meeting
Thursday, April 20, 2023
5:00 PM to 7:00 PM

Cooper Landing Community Hall
(Mile 0.8 Bean Creek Road)
Cooper Landing, AK

For more project information, visit
www.sterlinghighway.net

If you have questions or require additional information about the meeting, please contact Jonathan Tyrrick, Project Manager, at 907-269-0453 or jonathan.tyrrick@alaska.gov
If you have questions about construction, please contact Shaun Combs, DOT&PF Project Engineer, at 907 595 2217 or Shaun.Combs@alaska.gov
The DOT&PF operates Federal Programs without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. Full Title VI Nondiscrimination Policy: dot.alaska.gov/tv/statement.shtml
To file a complaint, go to: dot.alaska.gov/civilrts/titlevi.shtml

Veterans Tele-Town Hall
with
Alaska VA Healthcare System Director
Tom Steinbrunner, FACHE
April 11, 2023
from 6 – 7 p.m.
To Participate Dial

1-833-980-3638

POC: One Stop Shop at 907-257-5463 or Alaskaquery@va.gov

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