

JIA board believes it already exceeds public notice standards

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The City and Borough of Juneau is looking at including more information on its enterprise board meeting agendas and is asking for feedback from those boards. The Juneau International Airport board believes it already goes above and beyond for providing information about its meetings.

Assemblywoman Ruth Danner, Assembly liaison for the board, said at the JIA meeting Wednesday that a member of the public has asked for more information to be published about the city's enterprise board meetings.

Currently the city publishes a Your Municipality advertisement in the Empire, which satisfies their requirement to publicly post meetings. Deputy city clerk Beth McEwen said the city clerk's office already fills the statute and city charter requirement for the city's enterprise boards by posting time, date and place of those meetings. But the public apparently wants a little more information posted in one place — like a simple addition of the big topics on the board's agenda.

“This particular request is not specifically directed to airport board,” Danner said. “I don't think the citizen that brought this forward had really even done any kind of survey at what the individual enterprise boards are doing to notify the public. I also know all of our boards are excellent about posting their agendas on the Internet.”

The look at including more information on further city boards was limited to enterprise boards — like the Bartlett Regional Hospital Board, airport board, Eaglecrest board and Docks and Harbors board — and not all the dozens and dozens of active city committees and task forces.

“She really wants the public to know what their government is doing,” Danner said. “That's her goal, is just increasing transparency.”

Danner didn't identify this particular citizens, however she did mention the woman is a member of the League of Women Voters.

Danner said at the January Human Resources Committee she wants one representative of each board to attend to discuss the idea of including enterprise board agendas along with the city publication.

She said her impression is the enterprise board information wouldn't necessarily be as extensive as what's printed for the Assembly, but would perhaps include key topics and refer the public to the board's website for a full agenda.

Board chairman Jerry Godkin questioned why the city was spending so much time on this issue on the request of one citizen.

"Have you heard public testimony on this before?" he asked. "Does this one person carry a lot of weight to where you have to feel you have to put the city through all of this?"

Danner said she has heard comments from other citizens, but no others have come forward in formal public testimony.

She has found that a lot of people express surprise at items coming before the Assembly and believe those items have gotten there too quickly. Danner said that if more information were centrally located about what action the enterprise boards are doing, people would see that these topics come up through vetting of various committees of these boards and have the opportunity to attend earlier in those conversations.

Both Godkin and member Ron Swanson said between the published notices in the Empire and what the airport posts online for the board, they feel very in tune with what is going on in community.

"As soon as we have an agenda, it goes on the Internet," Swanson said. "I look at it. I see no reason to publish the whole agenda in the newspaper."

Swanson was concerned with being able to add or modify items on the agenda. McEwen said the Assembly's notice uses the terminology "includes" and inserts language that provides the Assembly or specific staff opportunity to amend the agenda toward the beginning of the meeting. The same could be true for enterprise boards.

Airport Manager Jeannie Johnson said the cost of publishing the entire airport agenda is too prohibitive, or at least there isn't room in the budget at this point. She said adding a couple lines providing links to specific committee and board agendas would be doable. Johnson recognized that there is a population that doesn't have a computer or Internet access, but believes that would serve the majority of the citizens.

Swanson was still irritated with the notion.

"I've been rereading public notice requirements," he said. "We are not outside of any of that, with what we're doing. We publish day/time/place of the meeting. I think this is much to do

about nothing. All of the information the board members get are public. We don't know any more that's going to happen at these meetings than what's in the agenda. ... Really nobody cares what we do. People come to the airport two hours before their flight maybe. We are not at the tip of the sword for public outcry. You can come up with excuses for why you didn't know what was going on."

Godkin said he has no problem providing information the public is entitled to, however he believes the airport posting board information, agendas and minutes online goes above and beyond requirements and is sufficient.

Godkin asked Johnson to bring that message to the Human Resources Committee.

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