

**MINUTES OF THE ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD  
CONTINUATION OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF APRIL 15, 2002**

The Anchorage School Board met in Special Session on Tuesday, April 16, 2002 at 5:10 p.m. in the Board Room at the Anchorage School District Administration Building. This meeting is a continuation meeting of the Special Session of Monday, April 15, 2002. President Peggy Robinson presided.

A. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, FLAG SALUTE

Board Members Present: Debbie Ossiander, Tim Steele, Rita Holthouse, Peggy Robinson, Harriet Drummond, and Dave Werdal via teleconference. Jake Metcalfe arrived at 5:25 p.m.

Others Present: Carol Comeau, Pat McDowell, Mike Henry, Jerry Sjolander, Patricia McRae, Gail Opalinski, Jeff Wood, Dale Cope, Debbie Bogart, Corey Rennell, Mary Kay Sambo, the press, and other interested people.

B. SCHOOL BOARD COMMENTS

Ms. Robinson explained that there was one agenda item yet to be discussed on the agenda, which was the Recommendation for School Starting Times.

C. CONTINUATION OF CONSENT AGENDA

ASD Memorandum #237 – Recommendation for School Starting Times

It is recommended that the School Board approve the Superintendent's recommendation to retain the current school starting times for the 2002-2003 school year. It is further recommended that the Administration continue to annually evaluate the pros and cons of changing school starting times through researching the experiences at all levels (K-12) in other school districts; continuing discussions on this topic with the various community agencies and school staff, students, parents, and community most directly affected by this potential change; and to carefully evaluate the increased costs of making this major change. It is also recommended that the Superintendent give an update, and any further recommendations, to the School Board by April 1, 2003.

ACTION:

Moved by Debbie Ossiander                      to approve ASD Memorandum #237.  
seconded by Tim Steele

Superintendent Comeau stated that she made the recommendation on school starting times due to the great interest of the community and the District. Ms.

Continuation of the Special Meeting of April 15, 2002

Comeau feels that more time needs to be spent doing research and exploring what other districts have done to address this issue, and completing on-site visits at various places. She is looking forward to visiting Minneapolis and the West Coast to look at their innovative scheduling.

Deputy Chief of Police Mark Mew stated that he put the question of changing school start times to his command staff, who reviewed it as a public safety issue. One of their concerns is the spike of traffic accidents involving juveniles that occur when school gets out. Also, there is a higher crime spike that occurs during the lunch hour and when schools release students. APD is concerned that the evening rush hour not be overlapped with the time that high school students are released from school; it is safer for high school students to get out of school earlier in the day. Deputy Chief Mew stated that he understands that there is some research on how kids do with different start times, but APD only looked at the safety of students. He is also concerned about younger children being home without supervision. APD mainly looked at the high school problem.

Tim Steele asked Deputy Chief Mew if the peak time for accidents happens right after school, how much time is needed between rush hour and school release time. Deputy Chief Mew stated that is a difficult question to answer, but the highest spike occurs at 3:00 p.m.

Rita Holthouse asked if APD factored in middle school when they stated that they would like the school times to stay the same. Deputy Chief Mew stated they did not differentiate the age; their studies only deal with juveniles under the age of 18. He commented that it could be cumbersome to extract middle and high school students separately. Deputy Chief Mew stated that APD has no position on middle school release time.

Corey Rennell asked Deputy Chief Mew if he thought moving the high school release time from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. would have an impact on juvenile crime and if it will decrease. Deputy Chief Mew was reluctant to predict what he doesn't know for certain. He is most concerned about traffic accidents when inexperienced drivers are out during rush hour.

Debbie Ossiander stated that San Jose showed a decrease in crime when school was released later. Deputy Chief Mew stated that he did not remember reviewing information from San Jose, but did see a decrease in crime in Orange County, California.

Debbie Ossiander asked Deputy Chief Mew, knowing that he has a high school student, to put on his parent hat and give his experience with having a teenager in his house. Deputy Chief Mew stated that he doesn't have problems at his

house with his teenager. His son does well in school, is involved in after school activities, and gets home early enough so the family can have dinner together.

Peggy Robinson inquired about the morning rush between 6:30 and 8:00 a.m. when high school students are driving to school and if there are fewer accidents in the morning than the afternoon. Deputy Chief Mew stated that accidents went way up at the end of the day. He also commented that most students do not race to school, but are happy to get out of school. He further stated that this is just his opinion.

Pat McDowell and Dale Cope gave a power point presentation on School Start Times Task Force. Ms. McDowell explained the history of the Task Force and when the school start times were studied and discussed prior to 2001; background on why the task force was formed; objective; advertising to the public; community representation on the task force; participants on the task force; process used by the task force; what other districts are doing; options considered (10 initially considered, two recommended to the Administration); community engagement process; community input process; local findings; community comments; agencies that weighed in; task force recommendation; and Administrative recommendation.

Carol Comeau commented that the Administration recognized that there is strong interest in change. Her basis for the recommendation is to look at this over the next year and gather additional data. She is interested in what alternatives that the Administration can come up with. The Administration must look at the starting times as well as construction and housing issues. Ms. Comeau is interested in looking at a "stretch schedule" for students. Those students who have problems in the early morning could opt for a late start. Ms. Comeau knows of a high school that operates 12 hours a day and allows students to leave during the day and return if they need to. Superintendent Comeau understands that it is frustrating to the people in the audience, but she wants to bring this topic back after more review and more research has been completed. She also is interested to see what the legislature does on daylight savings time. She promised another report to the School Board in April 2003.

Dr. David Telford was unable to attend, but sent written testimony with Dr. Ann Morris. Dr. Telford is a psychiatrist and director of the Adult Mental Health Unit at Providence Hospital. He and his colleagues support changing high school start times and support Option E.

Barbara Dubovich, Deputy Director of Campfire USA, commented that she oversees 25 before and after school programs in the Anchorage School District, which serves 1,200 students. Over 700 students currently reside on the waitlist to get into the before and after school programs. The waitlist never goes below 500

Continuation of the Special Meeting of April 15, 2002

students. She also served on the Child Care Subcommittee for School Starting Times. Ms. Dubovich stated that she hopes elementary school start times do not change. She is concerned over the safety of elementary students in the early morning. An earlier start time would increase the need for after school care. Elementary students would be arriving home prior to their older siblings, who may be responsible for after school care. The preference of Campfire is to not move the start times for elementary age students.

Debbie Ossiander asked Ms. Dubovich why there is a wait list of 700 students. Ms. Dubovich responded that lack of school space and the ability to hire staff has been a problem. Ms. Ossiander also stated that parents have told her that morning care is harder to find than after school care.

Peggy Robinson asked Ms. Dubovich how much Campfire charges for morning care. Ms. Dubovich thought it was about \$145 per month, but was not sure. Ms. Robinson stated that she knows there is a large problem with kids walking to school too early in the morning with no supervision. Ms. Dubovich commented that more children attend after school daycare than in the morning because Campfire is controlled by what time the school is opened in the morning by the custodian. Most high school teachers can not access the program because they have to be at work by 7:00 a.m. in the morning. Most Campfire programs don't start until 7:00 or 7:30 a.m.

Cass Aiery thanked the School Board and the District for providing a process to discuss the school starting times. She stated that over 65 per cent favor a later start time. Ms. Aiery stated that we will never be able to prove that student achievement will increase until we make the change. Underachieving students and dropouts may do better if they are getting every boost they can get. She further stated that we must develop a busing system to move away from a three tier busing system. Ms. Aiery challenged the District to find the money to develop a plan to move high school start times in the fall of 2002. She supports Option C.

Judith Conte is the mother of three teenagers, one with delayed sleep phase. She grew up with a strong work ethic and is upset over letters to editors talking about lazy teenagers. Ms. Conte explained that her son has missed a lot of school due to his sleep disorder. She made an appointment at Providence Sleep Center and learned that he has delayed sleep phase. Ms. Conte blamed her son for being a lazy kid and when it was determined to be a medical condition, it was a humbling experience for her. She further explained the process that was used to get her son back on an acceptable sleep schedule. Ms. Conte requested the Board to look at what is in the best interest of the children.

Rita Holthouse requested a follow-up report on Ms. Conte's son.

Ms. Conte likes the staggered program suggested by the Superintendent.

Jake Metcalfe asked Ms. Conte what options she would prefer. She thinks things should stay the same in elementary; found some problems in middle school, but found it acute in high school. She wants high schools to start later. Ms. Conte is interested in changing the time for the population needing the change. She is not sure it will improve grades, but certainly won't help if the student is not in class. Ms. Conte urged the Board to deal with the population that needs the change.

Majorie McNeil served on the Achievement Subcommittee. She stated that the high school teachers are concerned over sleepy children. Ms. McNeil feels that change needs to occur within the high schools. She urged the School Board to direct the Superintendent to direct the principals to come up with ways to address the problem.

Dr. Ann Morris thanked the School Board and Superintendent for the opportunity to address them and for the invitation to serve on the School Start Times Task Force. She is disappointed that the Superintendent feels it is premature to change start times for next year, but feels real progress has been made in this direction. She and 26 other supporting physicians in the community, mostly pediatricians or psychiatrists, as well as 16 other mental health professionals from the adolescent unit at Providence, support a delay in start times based on their experience with many severely affected teens. Dr. Morris further stated that adolescents need more sleep and that their sleep wake times change. Some teens are so seriously affected that they are unable to get up for school and function in the early morning, resulting in increased absences or sleeping through classes, decreasing grades, increasing frustration, sometimes depression or substance abuse and too often school failure. Absent or sleepy students are not being educated to their potential or to better exit exam scores. Dr. Morris also reported a telephone call she made to Superintendent Dragseth of the Edina School District in Minneapolis who stated a very positive experience with the late start. He reported that students are more willing to go to school, attendance is better, there are reduced discipline referrals, and teachers can correlate attentive students with better class participation, more assignments completed, hence better grades. Superintendent Dragseth believes the main issue is to continue to work to helping high school students have a more optimum starting time that best meets their sleep patterns. Dr. Morris supports Option E as the most physiologic for all grades. She also urged the Board, if they choose to study the issue further, to adopt as an interim measure the trial of offering seventh and eighth hour classes in selected high schools for those students needing a later start time.

Continuation of the Special Meeting of April 15, 2002

Harriet Drummond stated that she is interested in the time zones that were in existence in the early 80s and hopes that the Superintendent would explore that in the next year. Ms. Drummond asked Dr. Morris what her professional opinion is on taking our morning daylight and adding it to the afternoon. Dr. Morris responded that it is a mixed picture and would most likely not benefit our students.

Ms. Robinson asked if there are optimal times for elementary students to learn. Her experiences with her two children reveal that the younger they are, the earlier they get up. Dr. Morris commented that there is more parental control with younger children, but the best learning time for younger students is the first few hours in the morning. Adolescents learn best closer to 10:00 a.m. in the morning.

Dr. Morris passed out written testimony from Karen McBride, School Nurse, and Megan McBride, student at Service High School, who were unable to attend the continuation meeting.

Ms. McBride requested that the District present a plan for school start times that reflects the health needs of the students to be implemented by the 2003-2004 school year; begin educational efforts next school year to educate teachers, school health providers, and other school personnel about student sleep needs and about the signs of sleep loss; create sensible start times, which support learning and health. Ms. McBride requested these suggestions be pursued with the same vigor as our most recent bond measures.

Megan McBride asks that the District delay high school start time for at least an hour; offer zero hour classes for those students and teachers who prefer to start early; shorten sports practice to at the most two hours long (Districtwide); encourage teachers to spend more of class time teaching, thus lessening the amount of homework for students; busy work (mindless worksheets) should be eliminated from curriculum, which gives students more time to focus on important work. Megan further explained that in order to combat her own sleep difficulties, she has chosen late arrival starting second hour. She has made up credits by taking correspondence classes and will take classes at UAA this summer.

Sandy Mintz, Chair of the Student Achievement Subcommittee, thanked the Board and the Superintendent for the opportunity to speak. She has a son in college and one in high school. Her college student had a difficult time getting to school and obtaining the grades that he was capable of attaining. Ms. Mintz feels that high school start times conflict with a student's biological clock. She feels that we have lost sight of what public education is. Transportation, babysitting for siblings, etc. should not direct public education. She also feels that fatigue

contributes to high accident rate for teens. Ms. Mintz suggests that the District offer seventh and eighth hour class on a trial basis in a couple of high schools.

Debbie Ossiander thanked Ms. Mintz for her testimony.

Rita Holthouse informed Ms. Mintz that she could ask questions that could be relayed to Deputy Chief Mark Mew. Sandy Mintz would like to know if APD has any idea how fatigue affects traffic accidents.

Darrel Kiefer served on the Transportation Subcommittee. He has a junior and an eighth grader. His junior student struggled in her freshman and sophomore years, but is doing better this year because she is driving. Mr. Kiefer feels the committee has done a good job gather information, but failed to communicate with the public. He feels there is a huge substance abuse problem in Anchorage with teens and believes a later start time is a step in a positive direction. Mr. Kiefer is pleased that the study will continue and would like to see a two-tier bus system studied.

Peggy Robinson asked Mr. Kiefer if the use of more public transportation was something that was discussed so kids could get to school at different times. Mr. Kiefer responded that it was discussed, but People Mover has only 40 buses compared to the District's 250 buses. It was not felt that they could do anything to help. Safety standards were also a concern with the Municipality transit system.

Vickie McCubbin, teacher at Hanshew, is here to share the combined opinions of the Hanshew Middle School staff. There are concerns about academics, home life, activities, and staff. Some students at Hanshew are involved in the Twenty-First Century Learning Grant, which tutors and offers enrichment classes to students after school. With the late start, there is a concern that students would not be successful in this program. Proposed changes for middle school could create hardships for families depending on middle school students helping with sibling care, late arrival home and student involvement in private sports programs. Transportation may be an issue for several staff members who will not be able to work late due to family commitments. Ms. McCubbin surveyed her students and they liked the 9:30 a.m. start time, but did not like the 4:00 p.m. release time. The school staff hopes that the School Board supports the Superintendent's recommendation.

Peggy Robinson commented that Fairbanks middle schools have started school at 9:30 a.m. for a very long time. She encouraged Ms. McCubbin to have some discussions with the schools in Fairbanks to see how some of the problems brought up in Anchorage could be resolved. Ms. Robinson also asked Ms. McCubbin on what happens to the students who arrive at school too early. Ms.

Continuation of the Special Meeting of April 15, 2002

McCubbin explained that the students assemble in the atrium and some of the early arrival teachers have sponsored activities for them.

Gail Opalinski informed the Board and the Superintendent that she has reports from some school that students are dropped off as early as 7:00 a.m. In most schools, designated areas are established near the office for these students. Ms. Opalinski is concerned about moving the starting time from the 8:15 a.m. timeline for middle schools.

School Board President announced a short break at 7:00 p.m.

The School Board resumed their meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Carol Comeau stated that she has a strong commitment to studying school starting times and is not without sympathy to these young individuals. She is interested in a "stretch schedule" and has heard of other districts doing this and being very successful. Ms. Comeau is committed to doing additional research and bringing back progress reports to relieve the Board's anxiety. She does not want a Districtwide change at this time. There will also be budget ramifications to consider if a change is made. Ms. Comeau assured the Board and the community that the District Administration is taking this topic very seriously. This is not an easy topic, but there are students who are struggling and she wants to do what is best for kids. Ms. Comeau further stated that this is her commitment if the Board approves her recommendation.

Corey Rennell commented that a lot of students liked the current schedule, but there were just as many who wanted a change although he is not sure what they wanted. School ending at 4:00 p.m. impacts extra curricular activities. For example, Anchorage Youth Court would be impacted by additional rental fees for courtrooms and some sports practices run from two to four hours per day. It would also be difficult for students to be in the professional work place when school releases near the time that most businesses close or when rush hour begins. Mr. Rennell likes Option F, but realizes there will be a budgetary impact. Option F targets the high school now and does not alter the middle and elementary students. Mr. Rennell feels that a 4:00 p.m. release time is too late for high school; he likes 3:00 or 3:30 p.m. He said that he has a lot of support from students who support an extended day. As a student, he received a dozen responses that concurred with Option D and Option F. Mr. Rennell, personally, supports the Superintendent's recommendation.

Debbie Ossiander commented that in the past, many elementary schools started at varying times. She asked if we could look at staggered times again to help with the budgetary impact. Ms. Comeau responded that the District couldn't do this due to the music, art, physical education, and shuttles for special education

students. Steve Kalmes also noted that with the opening of two new middle schools, more buses are required to deliver students. Special education regulations require that a student not remain on a school bus over a certain period of time each day.

Rita Holthouse is pleased to hear the discussion on a "stretch schedule." She feels it could address overcrowding and will allow students to take additional classes. Ms. Holthouse inquired if it is still necessary for teachers to sign-off on teaching more than six classes per day. Carol Comeau will check on this, and will need to negotiate with all unions involved to obtain an agreement on a "stretch schedule." She further stated that it is critical to find volunteers who would like to participate in this idea. We must also consider the staff's families and look at the custodial issues and the gap that occurs when the BPO leaves and the night person comes on duty.

Rita Holthouse asked if Chugiak High School offers classes during the lunch hour. Mike Henry responded yes, they are on a three lunch period schedule. He mentioned that you could use a four lunch period schedule with teachers using all classrooms on a rotation basis. You would start at 7:30 a.m. and end at 5:30 p.m. Mr. Henry further commented that buses would be a nightmare.

Ms. Holthouse asked if the District has looked at first hour being a conference hour for all teachers and teachers would then teach for five periods. This gives students a one-hour late start and could reduce class size.

Tim Steele commented that this has been an interesting discussion, but feels that we need to look at kids first. We also have to look the budget and other efficiencies. He said we should be creative and look at innovations that will be good for kids. This would be a better use of the building as well as help kids with additional studies; i.e., Alaska Studies. Mr. Steele spoke with Mr. Kalmes and understands that transportation can be a limiting and costly factor, but we must be efficient. School designators will be coming out within a couple of years and could be a problem when parents will have the right to choose a school for their child. Mr. Steele suggests that the District work with the Municipality and various consultants to come up with an ideal transportation system that would solve these problems. He suggested we need to use our resources, i.e., Representative Don Young who is head of the Transportation Committee. Mr. Steele does not want to be limited by budget, regulations, etc. to solve this problem. He suggests a brainstorming session to suggest options on the transportation issues.

Harriet Drummond reminded the Board that if they are interested in influencing the daylight savings issue, they need to lobby Representative Lancaster while

Continuation of the Special Meeting of April 15, 2002

they are in Juneau on April 20-24, 2002. He would most likely appreciate support from a district as large as Anchorage.

Jake Metcalfe commented that one of the issues that he is most frustrated with is that we don't follow task force recommendations. Mr. Metcalfe supports Option E and has a problem with not following the Task Force's recommendation after the Board has heard this much discussion. He understands that transportation issues are huge, but is hearing "this can't be done." Mr. Metcalfe suggested informing Congressman Young about our ideas and invite him to meet with us.

Peggy Robinson stated that school starting times has been an issue for many years. She went through her collection of information over the past five years and came up with a few questions. She commented that both Minneapolis and North Clackamas, Oregon actually did make the change to make the middle schools start last. Ms. Robinson asked Ms. McDowell why the Task Force did not consider this. Ms. McDowell responded that when the scenarios were reviewed, there was less discussion on why certain scenarios were thrown out. She stated that the committee came mostly to discuss high school changes. There was a group consensus that there was more of a need at the high school level.

Peggy Robinson stated that it was her expectation that the Board be provided with executive summaries and recommendations from each of the subcommittees. She did not see that in the information provided. Pat McDowell responded that each of the subcommittees provided information, which was included in the books that are available for review in the School Board office. Dale Cope stated that each subcommittee followed their own format, some were more detailed, but each subcommittee completed a summary.

Peggy Robinson stated that the current system has flaws. She saw in surveys and information from the web based comments that 2/3 of the people want a change. They were unsure of what they wanted, but did want change. Ms. Robinson agrees with the Superintendent that there is not enough good information to make the change tonight. Ms. Robinson urged the Board to make this discussion a high priority. She is concerned with students coming to school one to one and one-half hours early—this is a problem whether it is elementary, middle, or high school. The District has a responsibility to employers to make the school schedule work for working parents, but always keeping in mind that child learning is the most important and that children are safe. Ms. Robinson is not convinced that time shifting (daylight savings time) will solve anything.

Carol Comeau appreciates the fact that the Board has been thoughtful about this discussion with the Administration, community, and medical community. She assured those individuals with issues that appear problematic that the Administration will work on solving them. Ms. Comeau further emphasized that

employment situations in Alaska have gotten more complex, but many of these issues are community issues. The Administration is committed to coming up with creative solutions. One of the things not discussed tonight is the community use of our buildings. This is not a reason to not do anything, but it is a factor that must be considered. There are a number of significant issues that will be discussed to find viable solutions.

Debbie Ossiander commented that the research seemed very compelling on sleep deprived students. She feels it was worth the discussion due to the impact on student achievement. Ms. Ossiander stated that change is most effective when it is not done with a slim majority; the work must be done to build support for change. She liked the Superintendent's comments at the beginning of the meeting and feels reassured. Ms. Ossiander believes extending the school day will offer a multitude of advantages. This could be a remedy for some of the overcrowding at our high schools. It could also accommodate students who want to achieve more with their education. Ms. Ossiander would like Ms. Comeau to report back earlier than April 2003 on several issues raised here tonight as well as the Administration's measurable progress on this topic.

AMENDMENT:

Moved by Jake Metcalfe to amend the motion to include  
seconded by Harriet Drummond updates in October and January.

Carol Comeau stated that she sees no problem with quarterly updates on school start times. She will ask the instructional group to continue working on this issue. With Ms. McDowell retiring and the construction season almost ready to begin, there will be an impact, but the Administration will work through this. Ms. Comeau encouraged Board members to e-mail her with any questions they may have. She also wants to keep those people who are still interested in this topic to continue working with the District. Ms. Comeau will strive to give her periodic updates to the Board beginning at the end of the first quarter 2002-2003 and during January 2003 when the budget is being discussed.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT:

Ayes: Ossiander, Steele, Holthouse,  
Robinson, Drummond,  
Metcalfe, Werdal

Nays: None

AMENDMENT TO THE MAIN MOTION PASSED

Debbie Ossiander is interested in trying a pilot at several sites to see how it works. The Administration is also interested in this. Ms. Comeau commented

Continuation of the Special Meeting of April 15, 2002

that we need to find schools that are interested in participating in a pilot. Contract issues must also be considered.

Rita Holthouse is concerned how high schools involved in the smaller learning communities can shoulder an extended day schedule. Mike Henry responded that a "stretch schedule" would not be in conflict with the concept of the smaller learning communities, it would fit right in thus making it better for students.

Tim Steele commented that this discussion has been as good as one at a work session. When Superintendent Comeau commented on the use of our facilities by the community, there may be a way to roll in some of the day care needs with pre-school partners. Research shows that a lot of learning takes place from three to five years old. Another partner to look at is Community Schools and how they could help. Mr. Steele said it is always good to look at things that excite other people. He would like to see the Municipality involved and the Mayor's support would be valuable. Mr. Steele believes that elementary can start earlier, but is not prepared to vote on one of the options tonight because there is so much more work to be done and the Administration will undoubtedly come up with better ideas. Mr. Steele is concerned for the Superintendent and the resources available to her to complete this project. Mr. Steele reminded the Board that the Superintendent will need their support.

Dave Werdal sees some difficulties with this because whatever you do will cost more money. He is in favor of high school starting later, and would like to find a way to do it even with budget ramifications. An extended day makes more sense to him. He encouraged the Board to narrow the decision down to two scenarios and then make a decision. Mr. Werdal wished the Board well on this decision as his term is ending at the end of April. He stated that he would be actively watching the Board on this topic.

VOTE ON MAIN MOTION:

Ayes: Ossiander, Steele, Holthouse,  
Robinson, Drummond, Werdal

Nays: Metcalfe

MAIN MOTION PASSED

President Peggy Robinson announced that the school start times would remain the same for next year.

D. PERSONS TO BE HEARD ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

E. COMMUNICATIONS & SCHOOL BOARD COMMENTS

Debbie Ossiander gave a brief legislative report to the Board.

Carol Comeau reminded everyone about the meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 17 from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. with Annalee McConnell, State Budget Director, to discuss the impact of the state budget.

Harriet Drummond announced that she attended an Assembly Work Session on snow removal and found it very interesting. She also was present for a presentation on East High School Phase 2 and 3.

Harriet Drummond encouraged the Board to support the deletion of daylight savings time.

F. EXECUTIVE SESSION – (PERSONNEL/FINANCE/NEGOTIATIONS/LITIGATION)

G. ADJOURNMENT

The Continuation of the Regular Meeting of April 15, 2002 on April 16, 2002 was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

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Peggy Robinson, President

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Harriet Drummond, Clerk