

Call number: 01-79-06 PT. 1 SIDE A

Name: Local Government – Jim Doogan, Ben Marsh, Mike Harper, Byron Mallott, Eben Hopson, Lee Sharp

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Notes: Original on 7-inch reel. Master copy on CD.

The recording starts with the chairman's voice welcoming people to local government workshop. His name is Byron Mallott. Then he introduces panel members:

- Jim Doogan [unclear] will serve as the representative of constitutional convention
- Eben Hopson, mayor of North Slope Borough who served in the territorial house of representatives and for state senate for many years.
- Ben Marsh, who served as a city manager of Anchorage from 1967-1968 and in city council in 1969.
- Lee Sharp, a former member of Juneau Borough Assembly and now a municipal attorney for city and borough of Juneau.
- Mike Harper who was recently the executive director of Rural Alaska Community Action Program.

Chairman goes on welcoming students who are present as a class assignment and delegates who may be in the audience.

They are going to discuss the local government section of the state constitution. He thinks that there has been a generational change, and says that the local government article was very innovative when it was written.

5:03 Another man's voice says that he's pleased with the local government committee's work. When they started out, they didn't know what they wanted, but they wanted to eliminate one layer of government, like counties or cities, and so they came up with the idea of a borough. Boroughs were established and they could either be organized or unorganized. Cities and state had taxing authority. Boroughs would be the primary local government entity beneath the state.

[Break in the recording.]

12:50 Another man's voice talks about urban and suburban areas of the city. [Sound is quite unclear, but he's talking about boundaries and the setup of local government and its powers.]

20:00 A man's [Ben Marsh's] voice says that he came to Alaska in 1966 to be a city manager and he had been a city manager in other cities for 16 years so for most of his career, he has dealt with local government. During early 1960s, Alaska had a new idea concerning local government, called a borough, which was to eliminate duplication of services and solve most of the ills that bother local government in United States. They have hundreds of autonomous municipalities in competition with each other and [unclear] responsibilities to their neighbors. The speaker wonders how the society would manage itself so badly.

The speaker was excited about coming to Alaska and participating in the new form of government and he hasn't lost that excitement. He thinks that Alaska has one of the most innovative local government structures in the United States.

21:53 The mandatory borough act that Jim talked about dates from 1964 and it requires that organized areas form boroughs but gives them choices. [Talks about various kinds of boroughs and their governments].

The man wants to touch upon one of the mechanisms that are provided for in the constitutional convention to bring about coordination and working relationship between cities and boroughs that occupy same territory. That was the interlocking membership of city councils and borough assemblies that were made up of persons to be elected in district basis and cities were to be represented by their city councils.

From 1970-1975, the system was changed. [Talking about the change that was a result of not having true representation and also because of other problems].

25:10 One of the things that happened as a result of establishing cities and boroughs was that power struggle was made inevitable. [About the structure of the power struggle between home rule city and borough powers].

The speaker doesn't know if the legislature anticipated the power struggle situation but it had to be solved. The mechanism for solution turned out to be unification and they have had successful unifications with 9 boroughs that are there. The speaker expects Fairbanks to be unified soon because of the tension between the city and North Star Borough.

27:40 Talking about providing services within city and borough. Annexation was never a successful method for providing services because of power struggles. Local boundary commission was meant to mandate boundaries from state level but they never functioned that way. They were called to arbitrate boundary disputes but they didn't do much. [About Eagle River borough that the boundary commission decided to disallow.]

29:44 The speaker thinks that unification is probably the most successful governmental institution that the speaker has seen. It combines the advantages and has none of the disadvantages. [Lists the merits.]

The speaker thinks unification is the local government structure of the future that will solve lots of problems that haven't been solved in the rest of the country. He thanks the audience.

31:39 Another man's voice [Chairman?] thanks Ben [Marsh]. [Unclear talking.] [Mike Harper] says he's glad for being able to respond directly to the topic of unorganized borough. He's going to talk about local government, regional government and boroughs in particular rather than talking from the point of view of his agency. He's going to present one model that they have developed.

The speaker points out that many people choose to live in unorganized boroughs to get away from the government structures. They are trying to have some form of government without having the unorganized boroughs lose the feeling of independence, and unorganized boroughs have been the way of doing that.

[More talking about sparse rural population and their involvement with government boards and services.] They are considering defining the boundaries of unorganized boroughs that would follow ANCSA Native Corporation and Educational Service Area boundaries. Unorganized boroughs wouldn't simply be administrative districts but rather they would have locally elected assemblies that would deal with matters of education and regional planning. That would increase local input. Public safety and health might be additional areas.

35:24 The speaker mentions that state operated school system has been done away with and that it has been replaced by regional education advisories. The speaker has heard that it was a success. More talking about REAAs [Regional Educational Attendance Areas] and how boroughs were to be culturally and otherwise integrated areas.

Talking about funding for services such as schools despite of unorganized boroughs having no taxing authority. Department of education has paid for REAAs directly.

Talking about establishment of how unorganized borough government will impact planning for the unorganized borough on two fronts: First, unorganized boroughs will be fundamental units in decision making, like in planning. Development of resources and services would be made by each unorganized borough. Unorganized borough would be required to consider plans of cities and other communities within their region.

38:20 Secondly, various state departments act in review capacity to [unclear] and evaluate proposals for federal funding of programs and capital improvement projects. More talking about planning and review process that would help areas make wise use of their resources.

Request for state and federal funds by local communities, non-profit corporations, and other bodies would be channeled to unorganized borough assembly for review and comments prior to being reviewed by state department.

In addition to the suggested [inaudible] powers of planning, the speaker recommends that unorganized borough would acquire powers to public safety and health which are of vital importance to rural Alaska. Police and emergency medical services would be included. Second class cities and virtually all unorganized boroughs would be able to exercise police power.

40:00 Public safety powers are assumed on regional basis. Talking about organizing police powers between village and regional police, and in relation to state troopers. That would free state troopers to be able to answer to serious crimes.

Talking about organizing health services in unorganized boroughs. Talking about other powers too.

42:33 The speaker is looking for feedback for a model in which unorganized boroughs couldn't tax, wouldn't be required to set up borough assemblies, planning commissions or school boards, and they wouldn't acquire area wide powers besides health and public safety.

They want to nourish local leadership and involvement.

State would need to fund the unorganized boroughs [talks about forms of taxation that could do this.] The speaker asks for suggestions and comments.

44:23 Another man asks Mike [?] to comment what the local government article has to say about the creation of local government agencies. [Unclear talking.]

The previous speaker's voice says that he agrees with the previous speaker. [Explaining his view on the Alaska politics in 1960s.]

48:24 [Unclear talking].

[End of the recording.]