

Miyagi Prefectural Assembly News

The 344th Miyagi Prefectural Assembly (November 2013 Regular Meeting)

1. Overview

The 344th Miyagi Prefectural Assembly saw Miyagi governor, Yoshihiro Murai, who won re-election for the second time last October, face his first real debate since being re-elected. On the last day of the November meeting, the chairperson and vice-chairperson elections occurred, resulting in Toshitake Ando and Iwao Atusmi being elected to chairperson and vice-chairperson respectively. Also, the Assembly Management Committee and the six standing committees were restructured: the Special Budget Committee will remain, the Great East Japan Earthquake Reconstruction and Recovery Policy Survey Committee will be reorganized, and four new special committees will be established.

1. Session: November 22nd (Fri.) – December 13th (Fri.) 2013: 22 days

2. Resolutions Total: 1

“Pursuance of the immediate withdrawal of the current positioning of the Air Defense Identification Zone by China”

3. Assembly Suggestions Total: 7

- I. “Suggestions regarding issues such as government finance measures that will accompany the conclusion of exemptions to merged prefecture and local municipality settlement accounting”
- II. “Suggestions pursuing the improvement and bolstering of nursing care and senior citizen policies”
- III. “Suggestions pursuing the systemizing of expenses etc. due to relocations from temporary housing”
- IV. “Suggestions pursuing the mandating of early periodical vaccination of the ‘four vaccines’ (chickenpox, parotitis, hepatitis, and adult pneumococcus”) that are currently optional.”
- V. “Suggestions regarding the improvement of the convalescence system of the National Hansen's Disease Sanatorium”
- VI. “Suggestions pursuing the realization of reasonably priced and stable supply of petroleum goods and extraordinary measures to combat the precipitous price increase of petroleum goods.”
- VII. “Suggestions pursuing the continuance of the light oil tax exemption system”

4. Bills Submitted by the Governor Total: 70

- 2013 Miyagi fiscal year general accounting supplementary budget revisions, etc. (2 items)
- Provisions etc. determining the number of case workers (23 items)

- Establishment of public lottery tickets price limits, etc.
- In regards to the designation of designated managers at the Sanctuary Center of Izunuma-Uchinuma in Miyagi Prefecture (16 items)
- In regards to the finalization of construction sub-contracting contracts, etc. (23 items)
- In regards to pursuing consensus on the appointment of vice-governors, etc. (3 items)

5. Petitions Total: 5

- I. “In regards to the financial educational support for private high schools”
- II. “Pursuance of the submission of suggestions for the improvement of government policies to provide reasonably priced and stable supply of petroleum goods and extraordinary measures to combat the precipitous price increase of petroleum goods”
- III. “In regards to the pursuance of the improvement of the convalescence system of the National Hansen's Disease Sanatorium”
- IV. “In regards to the submission of suggestions pursuing the sustaining of the light oil tax exemption system”
- V. “In regards to the increase of private school education subsidies”

6. Questions & Inquiries

18 assembly members made general inquiries into the various issues involved in the progress of recovery related projects, their outlook, and prefectural governance.

7. Results:

Resolutions	1 item approved
Assembly Suggestions	7 items approved
Bills Submitted by the Governor	70 items approved
Petitions	5 items adopted

2. Main Details of the Assembly Inquiry Session

1. In regards to the progress of earthquake disaster related projects:

- Inquiry: Please tell us about the progress of important items on the recovery agenda.
- Reply: A date of completion for debris removal within the 2013 fiscal year has been set, and preparation of public housing for the disaster affected and relocating of disaster preparedness groups are steadily moving forward. In the reconstruction stage we plan to accelerate plans for development of employment opportunities and housing.

2. In regards to the vitalization of tourism:

- Inquiry: Please tell us about efforts to improve tourism in the Matushima bay area.
- Reply: We are making efforts to vitalize tourism through plans to introduce tours based on famous sites related to Haiku poet Basho Matsuo, creating tour signs in the area that weave the local history and culture into a story-based narrative.

3. In regards to dealing with the eradication of discrimination against the disabled:

- Inquiry: Please tell us about the prefecture's ordinance that deals with eradicating discrimination against the disabled.
- Reply: The prefecture is deliberating as to what measures are needed in order to eliminate discrimination, including the introductions of new ordinances, and is now researching municipalities that have already instituted such ordinances and policies that will be established in the future as government policy.

4. In regards to primary industry issues:

- Inquiry: Please tell us about the national government newly instituted policies dealing with rice.
- Reply: This sudden policy development will greatly affect the prefectural agriculture. Miyagi Prefecture has already requested immediate and extensive alleviation measures. Also, the prefecture here on out intends to act firmly as we endeavor to provide vital information to those in agriculture and take the necessary policy steps to avoid confusion and disruption in the prefecture's agriculture sphere.

5. In regards to mental health-care for children:

- Inquiry: Please tell us about the increase in truancy.
- Reply: Miyagi Prefecture's middle school truancy rate is the highest in the country. In addressing this issue we believe that mental health-care is of the utmost importance. The prefecture has placed mental health counselors and extra teachers in schools in regions that were most affected by the disaster. We also intend to obtain the assistance of outside experts as we aim for early intervention and prevention.

6. In regards to the establishment of a medical department:

- Inquiry: Please tell us about the prefecture's support system and establishment schedule.
- Reply: To head the support of the establishing of a medical department we have established a full-time employee within the prefecture's Health and Welfare Department and are intending to improve the framework for such a department. According to the Ministry of Education's basic policy outline, in the case the department is to be opened in April of 2015, the framework for one school will be adopted in June 2014's specialist conference, with a framework for the establishment of a medical department to be submitted by May 2014.

3. Greeting from the New Chairperson and Vice-chair Person:

We feel great responsibility and call to duty taking on this position. Two years and ten months have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake. Although the disaster affected areas plow onwards towards recovery, the scars from that day remain deeply etched in the prefecture, and urgent issues requiring swift action continue to surface.

For our home Miyagi to recover and further develop, harnessing all of our citizens assistance is indispensable. As such we believe that the role of the assembly will only become of more importance henceforth.

We intend to work as one with the assembly to obtain a recovery that Miyagi citizens can be proud of. In this we sincerely ask for everyone's support and cooperation.

(From the 38th Chairperson: Toshitake Ando and the 35th Vice-chairperson: Iwao Atsumi)

4. Standing Committees

1. General Affairs and Policy Planning Committee

- The assembly bill on the "Partial Amendment of Ordinances Concerning Government Worker Wages" was reviewed and ratified.

2. Environment, Lifestyle and Agricultural, Forestry and Fisheries Industry Committee

- The assembly bill on "the Ordinance to Determine the Fixed Number of Committee Members of the Forestry Council" was reviewed and ratified.

3. Health and Welfare Committee

- The assembly bill on the "Ordinance to Determine the Fixed Number of Case Workers" was reviewed and ratified.

4. Commerce, Industry and Tourism Committee

- Assembly bills in regards to the designation of designated managers (Miyagi Prefecture Osaki Camping Area) were reviewed and ratified.

5. Construction Enterprise Committee

- Assembly bill in regards to the finalization of construction sub-contracting contracts (Construction of Disaster Recovery Public Housing in the Northern area Ishinomaki City's Koganehama) were reviewed and ratified.

6. Education and Public Safety Committee

- The assembly bills, among others, "Ordinance on the Partial Amendment of Prefectural School Ordinances" were reviewed and ratified.

5. Special Committees

1. Special Budgetary Committee

On December 9, 2013, a question and answer session comprised of 11 committee members was held. Afterwards the 2013 Fiscal Year General Accounting Supplementary Budget was ratified after undergoing review by all committees.

2. Newly Established Special Committees

- I. The Renewable Energy Research Committee
Objective: To research policies related to renewable energy
- II. Children and Child-Care Environment Research Committee
Objective: To research policy options related children and child-care environment
- III. Employment Stabilization and Regional Economy Vitalization Research Committee
Objective: To research policy options related to vitalization of the regional economy and employment stabilization
- IV. Sports Promotion Research Committee
Objective: To research policy options relation to sports promotion