

Miyagi Prefectural Assembly News

The 359th Miyagi Prefectural Assembly (February 2017 Regular Session)

1) Session: February 17, 2017 (Fri.) to March 16, 2017 (Thu.), 28 days

2) Outline

The 359th Miyagi Prefectural Assembly (February 2017 regular session) was held over a period of 28 days from February 17 to March 16, 2017. 147 bills were approved in their original forms, including the preliminary budget bill to allocate 1.2250 trillion JPY for the FY 2017 general account. FY 2017 is the last of four years of the Reconstruction Stage of the Miyagi Prefecture Disaster Recovery Plan. During his statement, Governor Yoshihiro Murai strongly emphasized, “This is a critical year that will lead up to the Development Stage. We will work whole-heartedly to achieve swift recovery.” The representative and general inquiries included discussions regarding support for disaster victims as well as repair and preservation work on the aging Sant Juan Bautista, a replica of the ship used during the Keicho Mission.

3) Bills Voted On

1. Motions (total): 1

- Motion to amend a part of the ordinance related to the issuance of political activity costs for the Miyagi Prefectural Assembly

2. Resolutions (total): 1

- Resolution to denounce North Korea’s ballistic missile launches

3. Proposals (total): 7

- Proposal for introducing a renewal system, etc. for designated waterworks equipment construction contractor(s)
- Proposal for promoting maintenance of free public wireless LAN (Wi-Fi) environment, etc.

4. Bills Submitted by the Governor (total): 138

- FY 2017 Miyagi Prefecture General Account Budget, etc.

5. Petitions (total): 2

- Petition regarding the hosting of a public hearing related to Sendai Power Station establishment issue (approved)
- Petition regarding partial exemption of medical costs as well as reduction of nursing insurance costs for Great East Japan Earthquake victims (not approved)

4) Summary of Representative and General Inquiries Made During the Assembly

1. Application Period Extension of Additional Financial Aid for Disaster Victims to Rebuild Their Lives

While the application deadline for additional financial aid was already extended to April 10, 2018, when considering factors such as the number of applications, progress of residential land provision, and other municipal projects, another extension was deemed necessary and the possibility of continuing the system after FY 2018 was brought up.

2. Local Resident Consensus Regarding Radioactive and Mixed Waste Incineration Policy

Regarding this problem, there will be individuals with concerns no matter which removal method is chosen, so each head of government must make a decision following a disaster. They should make every effort to explain their decision to the residents, including how they reached that decision.

3. Policy to Expand Overseas Market for Prefectural Products

The prefecture has conducted invitation programs with trusted overseas buyers, joint promotion through sales expansion of main exports, and efforts to seek cooperative policies with nearby prefectures. By working with support organizations like the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and initiatives involving several prefectures such as the “Sanriku Brand” project, the prefecture will continue to pursue expansion of exports.

4. Repairs and Long Term Preservation of Sant Juan Bautista, the Replica Ship of the Keicho Mission

The prefecture extensively surveyed specialists and experts about the possibility of long term preservation. However, due to the damage sustained from the large tsunami of the Great East Japan Earthquake, the difficulty in securing a shipbuilder, and the possibility of the hull being unable to withstand repairs due to rotting and deterioration, full-scale repairs are underway with the understanding that long-term preservation is highly unlikely.

5. Regarding Opinions About Careful Consideration of Transferring Operation Rights of Waterworks and Sewerage Systems to Private Companies

By using the private sector’s expertise, funds, and technical capabilities to the fullest, the prefecture aims to reduce costs and put a reasonable limit on replacement investment in order to stabilize operation. The prefecture asks for understanding on ensuring fairness and will continue to operate independently and perform tasks such as setting prices.

5) Activities of the Prefectural Assembly in Relation to Restoration and Reconstruction Efforts

In order to promote restoration and reconstruction projects and address various issues in disaster-affected areas, prefectural assembly members went to disaster-affected coastal municipalities in early February to confirm recovery progress and engage in discussions with municipal assembly members.