
GOVERNMENT HILL COMMUNITY COUNCIL
C/O Community Councils Center • 1057 West Fireweed Lane, Suite 100
Anchorage, AK 99503

Melinda Gant, President
Kyle Stevens, Vice President
Cass Willis, Secretary-Treasurer
Kyle Stevens, FCC Representative
Mavis Hancock, Donna Rymut, and Greg Miller, At-Large Board Members
Stephanie Kesler, Past Presidents

GHCC Meeting Minutes
15 September 2016
Submitted by Cassandra Willis

President Melinda Gant, Presiding

Melinda opened the meeting at 6:39 pm.

1. Typical round the room introductions

2. Approve November Minutes

3. *Tom Brennen made motion to approve. Bob French seconded. The May Minutes passed unanimously without amendment.*

4. Legislative Update: Representative Les Gara

Les reported that the Knik Bridge project doesn't look like it's going forward. Legislation is out of session. He reviewed the process of budget approval and the results of the Legislative session.

5. Legislative Update: Senator Johnny Ellis

Richard Benavidez came as a representative for Mr. Ellis. He explained that the State bought another Legislative Building and that the new building does not have enough space, including Mr. Ellis. He explained that the Legislative staff will mostly be working from home but the staff that remains will be at the Benson and Minnesota, in the first and second floor of the Wells Fargo building.

They are working strongly on the NarCan bill, which would allow pharmacists to prescribe the medication used to treat heroin overdoses. The current hold up on the bill is the Pharmacist Training, which is being enacted by the Board of Pharmacy. The bill was signed in June, but the training has not been completed yet. Mr. Ellis encourages everyone to contact the Board of Pharmacy to expedite their process.

6. Assembly Update: Assemblyman Patrick Flynn

Joshua Spring represented Mr. Flynn. He relayed the gratitude of Mr. Flynn regarding the eponymously named “The Liquor Store” that is slated to take over the current Mini Mart. Acknowledged that homelessness and violence are on the rise around town. Mr. Flynn is aware and working on it with the rest of the Assembly. There appears to be no truth to the rumor that Central Middle School will be closing.

7. Candidate Presentation: Les Gara

Mr. Gara is running unopposed and will be focused on changing the Legislative process and would like our support.

8. Candidate Presentation: Tom Begich

Mr. Begich is running unopposed in the General Election. He has been part of our district for many years. He is dedicated to stopping the Knik Arm Bridge for good. He would like to address the State budget issue. He strongly supports a State Income Tax in combination with increasing sources of revenue from the oil and gas industry.

9. Candidate Presentation: Christopher Constant

Mr. Constant reinforced that the Knik Arm Bridge is not yet dead. He is focused on the infrastructure and transportation in his area. Safety and economic development will be part of his focus.

To enhance the effectiveness of the political process, he would like to increase the transparency and communication between the community councils because the neighborhoods have shared, common interests. If the neighborhoods work together with a common cause, they can be more forceful and affect change together.

Mr. Constant will be having a meet and greet on Wednesday, September 21st at 101 West Harvard from 5:30pm – 7:30pm. Refreshments and light snacks will be provided.

10. FCC Update: Kyle Stevens

Kyle explained that the FCC did not have a meeting this month. The FCC is working on a civic engagement project to increase resident involvement with the community councils and is taking any advice or input regarding those issues.

11. Parallel 64 LLC Introduction: Travis Jones, Owner

Travis and his assistant, Brandon, presented about their proposed marijuana cultivation and retail business in the Ship Creek area. Travis explained that security is their highest priority. Their application was granted on June 10. They have been to the Downtown Community Council and will be establishing a retail space on 5th Avenue.

12. Anchorage Port Update: Sharen Walsh, Todd Coles, and Scott Knowles

Sharen reported that Holland America Tours will be bringing 9 of their larger tour cruise ships next year, which is a significant increase.

The Small Boat Harbor's north spit is very eroded. The Port has obtained a grant for the remediation of the erosion and updating the retaining walls and increasing the structural integrity of the area. The redesign will include an installation in honor of the Eklutna Native tribe's history.

The Small Boat Harbor is a public boat launch and seems to be generally inactive during the winter due to weather conditions. The Port will be working with the AKRR because the property is owned by the AKRR and leased by the Port Authority. The Port only owns the specific "fingers" that contain the actual boat launch and the "spit."

The Port has a grant to increase lighting and install security cameras that will co-feed to the APD and also Port Security offices. The increased lighting and security camera are expected to be installed early next year. The AKRR, Port, and APD have an executed Memorandum of Agreement that allows all them all to co-monitor the Small Boat Harbor as necessary.

13. Anchorage Port Modernization Project: Todd Coles, and Scott Knowles

Todd Coles, the project manager for the Anchorage Port Modernization Project (APMP), updated the community that the current terminals have exceeded their life cycle and are rusting out. The new piles are 48" in diameter with a reinforced concrete center. The current piles are 24" diameter empty tubes. The new piles are projected for a 75-year lifespan.

Todd explained the purpose of the test pile project in relation to the project as a whole and the quantity of piles.

Scott Knowles, the Subject Matter Expert, spoke on the sound and noise impacts. He explained the methodology of the testing, including the placement of the unintended sound meters, which were placed at Brown's Point and Nightingale Park and the process for recording and monitoring the noise levels. He noted that our neighborhood is highly impacted by multiple sound sources, including military, commercial, and private aircraft; railway noise; roadway and port activity. They collected five weeks of these sounds to establish a baseline.

During the pile driving test, (despite being able to be heard in during several different locations), the results (inclusive ambient noise) were 56-73 dBA, which is below the Municipality's noise Ordinance of a maximum of 80 dBA per hour. They will be attempting to limit their work to the Municipality's Construction Code hours with few exceptions.

The first pile that was driven resulted in complaints from the public regarding potential ground-borne vibration. Subsequently, they monitored those vibrations. They believe that the "vibration" that people felt was actually low-frequency noise which is often mistaken for vibration because it causes similar side effects. Low frequency sound is commonly associated with impact pile driving.

They have reported their sound and vibration tracking findings. They will maintain the current sound monitoring stations throughout the construction process. They can share the sound files which include one-minute live recordings of any excessive noise events. In addition to the sound and vibration tracking for the neighborhoods, they are also constrained to operations that do not impact the oceanic wildlife, especially the beluga whale population.

Todd outlined the anticipated project timeline going forward and reiterated that they will continue to monitor the noise to stay within the appropriate constraints. Construction is expected to begin 2018. They have received only one complaint on their hotline and Melinda confirmed she has not fielded any.

14. APD Community Assessment: Officer Nave, APD CAP Team

Officer Nave sent out questionnaires to the communities, gathered and analyzed the results, and is now reporting back to the appropriate community councils.

Officer Nave outlined the top 5 concerns reported in our neighborhood as speeding, parking, drugs, thefts, and vandalism.

She reported that there were 871 calls reported for our area since the beginning of the year. That includes 112 parking problems, which were mostly regarding the East Bluff and Richardson Vista areas. 47 of the calls were initiated by Anchorage officers. The total number of calls is very high. The calls are concentrated in the high density housing on East Bluff, with 905 Richardson Vista responsible for 406 of the calls. The number of calls lessens proportionally the further away from that address. To reduce calls, the homeless camps need to be reported via the online process and all incidents of theft need to be reported online.

During their neighborhood monitoring, the Officers noted that the alleyways are unlit and remain dark, which is an attractive nuisance. She noted that the neighborhood does not have consistent, well-defined parking signage.

Officer Nave explained that parking issues should go through the Municipal traffic engineers to encourage them to paint curb lines and No Parking signs in no-parking zones. These are inexpensive deterrents to problematic parking issues. Parking issues are the lowest priority call that APD takes.

Illegally parked vehicles can be towed, but it is not an immediate remedy. Abandoned or trashed vehicles are towed within 24 hours and the owner will be fined. AKRR property is managed by APD. The AKRR's security team may also be able enforce trespassing issues. Parked vehicles that are being used as residences are difficult to address because they are mobile.

Sunset Park was mentioned in several responses as an unsafe area but there were only 15 total calls regarding parks for the entire year so far. Officer Nave reminded everyone that reporting park issues can be done anonymously. There have not been a large number of calls regarding the parks. Of the total 15 calls, five were officer initiated.

The overgrown landscaping in the Harvard and Sunset Park areas will provide excellent cover and encourage vagrants to take up residence. The Municipal Parks and Recreation Department is overtaxed at this time and will support the community's efforts to self-regulate the overgrowth issues at the parks.

Officer Nave encouraged residents to go out in groups of 5 or more to confront and deal with any problems in the neighborhood by letting the vagrants and trespassers know that the neighborhood will not stand for inappropriate behavior. There is a Municipal office that can provide safety vests and flashlights under a community policing grant if needed.

Officer Naves' recommendations are: increase motion-activated lights in alleyways on private homes. Encourage the private homes surrounding parks and wooded areas to install and maintain steady lights aimed into these areas. She emphasized that a well-lit area is a huge deterrent.

Additionally, she recommended cameras be placed on private property. Video coverage can be evidence in the case of an incident.

Homeless camps can only be reported through the MOA website. When reporting a homeless camp, please give descriptive locations and not GPS locations. If the campers are on public property, they will be notified to evacuate within 15 days. If the camp is on private property and the owner will authorize APD to remove the vagrants, the campers will have 15 minutes to evacuate.

Thefts and burglaries typically run in grouped days with gaps in between. All occurrences need to be reported in order for APD to analyze the data.

Officer Naves encouraged the public to monitor the raidsonline.com website which shows the reported crime in any area. There has only been one violent crime reported in our area this year.

Once a residence received eight police responses for nuisance calls, the owner can be fined for excess use of Municipal resources. The calls must be categorized as "nuisance" which does not include all types of calls, such as medial or domestic violence. The calls must be to a specific address or apartment number. Prior to receiving the fine, the address will be sent a warning letter and APD will require a Corrective Plan of Action from the property owner.

It was noted that the apartments on the East side are the highest density in the city, and two of the largest in the state. Officer Nave was clear that the property as a whole is not the problem but problematic residents or guests need to be identified.

15. Downtown Trail Connection Project: Solstice Alaska Consulting

Isobel invited the public to the Trail Connection's Open House on October 20th at the Train Depot from 5-7pm. She explained that the project is intended to increase the trail system to connect the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail and the Ship Creek Trail system.

Isobel explained that the group is working with the Railroad and Port to ensure stakeholder concerns, including safety, will be addressed.

16. Alaska Railroad Update: Tim Sullivan

Tim confirmed that the AKRR can evict trespassers on their property immediately. This includes the parks that are owned by the AKRR and managed by APD.

AKRR can now move liquefied natural gas from Southcentral to Fairbanks, making them the first railroad in the country approved for this type of service. LNG is considered less dangerous to transport than the current transportation of aviation fuel. AKRR has a plan for engaging with first responders and training them on not only the equipment, but how to appropriately handle emergent situations.

It would cost about \$60 million to extend the tract from the existing Y in the track to the LNG plant in Fairbanks. It is anticipated that the transfer of LNG will be happening in the Matanuska Valley.

17. Crowley Update: Greg Miller

Crowley's tank farm construction is almost complete and the containers will be operational by the end of October of this year. The military is not expected to utilize the tanks by December of this year. Crowley will make sure to present a status at next month's meeting. The tanks will be painted white next summer.

18. Community Gardens and Orchard Project Update: Steve Gerlek

Steve handed out an information flyer. Steve explained that there has been a lot of work on this project, both in the tangible and the legal/administrative sense. They have established by-laws and elected a Board of Directors for the project. They have also established the Community Committees which will be responsible for specific areas of the development and maintenance of the project.

The project group will be working with a National Park Service Community Assistance Program coordinator to work on fundraising and access to national grants, and volunteer outreach.

The water service was removed from the site by the DOT contractor. In order to re-establish the water service, it will cost \$18,000. The project group has secured a grant for \$10,000 toward this cost. Because this was promised by the DOT and they neglected to manage their contractor correctly, the project team is asking for the additional funds to be supplied by the DOT.

19. Knik Arm Crossing: Bob French

Bob mentioned the recent article by Craig Medred and the comments made tonight by Les Gara and Christopher Constant, he would like to emphasize that while the outlook for this project looks dire it has not been stopped in finality. Bob will continue to work in support of efforts to ensure that the project cannot proceed or be resurrected at some point in the future on behalf of the Government Hill Community Council.

20. Parks Committee Chair Appointment

Bob explained Mavis' long history as primary caretaker of the flowers on the West end of Nightingale Park. The Parks Committee would like the GHCC to pass a resolution to rename that area of the park (including the bench, flowers, and overlook) in honor of Mavis and Howard. The Resolution includes language requesting a plaque or sign. Greg Miller of Crowley said that he would ask whether Crowley has available community funds to help sponsor the signage.

Susan made motion to approve. Kyle seconded. The Resolution passed without amendment. There were 24 yes, zero no, and zero abstaining.

Bob was appointed Parks Committee Chair.

21. Community Trash Committee: Thomas Pease

Thomas contacted SWS to find out when they will be removing the community dumpster for the winter. He reports that SWS has been very responsive to any request for special service.

There were 100 bear-resistant trash containers ordered and 32 distributed in bear-dense properties in Government Hill. SWS has been willing to supply bear-resistant

containers to residences that have not been identified as bear-dense areas if the owners call SWS and request one.

22. Executive Committee Update: Melinda Gant

The Executive Committee made some decisions over the summer. China Town has applied to reestablish their liquor license and the Executive Committee reported to the Alcohol Control Board that the GHCC did not object.

The current liquor store at 867 E Loop Road is currently owned by Joon Noh. Mr. Noh is retiring and the liquor license and store facility will be transferred to new owners, K&T Enterprises. The Executive Committee, on behalf of the GHCC, executed a "Memorandum of Agreement Between Government Hill Community Council and Joon Noh." This MOA is slightly different from the conditions imposed on the ToGoMart.

23. Other Business and Neighborhood Concerns

Melinda explained that the gas station on the main corner is removing the unused gas tanks and will be creating parking in the area that was previously dedicated to the gas pumps.

Gabe asked if there's any chance to install basketball hoops or a court near the Richardson Vista apartments. The area is densely populated and lacks a safe place for children to be active. Currently, they must walk over a mile to the basketball court at Harvard Park.

Gabe reported that the Alderwood Park play equipment has been vandalized and he knows that Parks and Rec has been contacted but no action has been taken. Melinda committed to contacting the Muni again and inquire about the status of the work request. She will also call the graffiti hotline for them to assist.

It was recommended that the GHCC encourage Parks and Rec and also the private property owners of the high density housing on the East Bluff area to establish and maintain recreational activity areas.

The Hillcrest Child Care Facility is nonprofit and is turning 50 this year. They will be having a giant neighborhood fundraising bash in November. Residents are encouraged to donate and attend. They will be making an in-depth presentation during next month's meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:32 pm.