

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

ANCHORAGE PARKS & RECREATION



This memorandum provides background and responses to questions and points outlined in the Northeast Community Council's Resolution RJSP 2018-01. The resolution, provided below, outlines the community council's objection to new single track trails in Russian Jack Springs Park.

As per Title 21 (21.05.040), community council's with a boundary within 1000 feet of a park must receive public notice. Furthermore, notice is required to all community councils for work or projects related to Russian Jack Springs Park as per Title 21.03.020 (see highlighted).

Decision makers should note that the NECC provided a motion of support on May 21, 2015 for the proposed single track trails project. In light of two motions providing opposing positions on the same topic, additional communication with the NECC should be made in order to clarify the community council's position and why it has changed. It should also be noted that the initial support of single track trails received twice as many votes as the resolution opposing the trails.

The NECC resolution is below in black. P&R responses to questions are in [blue](#).

Supporting documentation is attached and includes:

- Title 21 Regulations regarding public noticing and community council involvement
- Title 21 Regulations regarding approval processes for master plans and site plans
- NECC Minutes May 21, 2015

Additional documentation can be provided upon request.

NORTHEAST COMMUNITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION RJSP 2018-01

Whereas, the NECC has historically been very concerned that its rights and duties as a community council with respect to that regional park known as Russian Jack Spring Park have been undermined and may have been violated and obstructed by Parks and Recreation staff, and

Whereas, these concerns are heightened by the fact that Parks and Recreation staff have not presented to the NECC various plans for changes made to the park over the last five years, and

- *Regarding the proposed Single Track Trails for north RJSP, the project was presented to the NECC (by a project advocate and not P&R) and a motion of support of the project was provided at the May 21, 2015 NECC meeting (see attached)*
- *In 2010-11, 11 public meetings and 6 VIP committee meetings were held for the North RJSP improvements project – it would be difficult to imagine that with such a robust process, members of the NECC would not have had an opportunity to provide input*
 - *North RJSP Project (PRC 7/11) (UDC 2012)*
- *Other projects – YEP improvements, First Tee*

Whereas, NECC repeatedly opposed both the Plans promoted by the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) Parks and Recreation Department (P&R) for Russian Jack Springs Park (RJSP) and the planning process adopted by that agency, and

- *This comment seems to run contrary to the recent work between P&R and NECC, In regards to the comment about the NECC opposing the “planning process adopted” by P&R - The NECC appears to have been fully supportive of both the planning process adopted by P&R and the outcome for the Chanshtnu Muldoon Park Master Plan*

Whereas, the last MASTER PLAN for RJSP was adopted by the MOA in 1979 and a site plan was allegedly adopted in 1997 by the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&ZC) though the planning process for the latter specifically excluded NECC from notice contrary to the provisions of MOA ordinance, and

- *Planning and Zoning Commission records of public notice may be difficult to find; however, standard procedures for public notice (AMC 21.03.020) would require, at the very least, noticing of property owners within 1000 feet of the park*
- *Further the Planning and Zoning Commission is a public hearing and members representing the NECC would have had the opportunity to raise this issue and provide comment*

Whereas, the community at large during hours of public testimony before the Parks Commission made it clear that it wished to see a systemic plan addressing RJSP before any further planning or development was undertaken, and

- *Minutes from the PRC meeting (7/11) for the approval of the North RJSP Project show only three people commenting – one who would like to advocate for more trail lighting, one in total support, and a one Mr. Grober testifying against*

- *Minutes from the PRC meeting (4/16) for the approval of two separate projects – the RJSP skatepark and RJSP outdoor learning labs each have three recorded public comments, all in favor of the proposed projects*

Whereas various members of the Parks Commission have indicated that the Master Plan is "dated" and the Commission's most recent resolution on RJSP called for additional planning and review before any further development or construction, and

- *While most might recognize that a master plan created in 1979 is "dated" – a review of PRC meeting minutes for the most recent items related to RJSP does not support this claim*
 - *PRC (7/11) N RJSP Project*
 - *PRC (6/16) RJSP Skatepark and RJSP Outdoor Learn Labs*
- *However, as PRC Resolution 2011-11 points out the community still wishes to invest in RJSP; "WHEREAS, as a result, adjacent community councils placed funding for improvements at Russian Jack Springs Park on their capital improvements list in hopes of achieving funding to renovate the park"*

Whereas, P&R has continued to expend resources changing RJSP without public consultation, and

- *Outreach for projects is project appropriate and clearly demonstrated*

Whereas, the RJSP MASTER PLAN as well as the 1997 site plan appear to call for completion of the adopted trail plan including the creation of a second tunnel under RJSP and the completion of trail lighting, including the lighting of the paved trail in North RJSP, and

- *Some of this work has yet to be completed... many of these are very expensive capital overlays*
- *Future master planning will enable the public and community councils to re-visit what they consider "community priorities", if these are the priorities, then implementation of the MP should prioritize them*
- *A previous statement seems to imply that the 1979 Master Plan is irrelevant while this "Whereas" is saying that it still stands*

Whereas, NECC believes that Parks and Recreation plans to revisit the RJSP Master Plan in the Fall of 2018, and Whereas, NECC believes that it has an obligation to provide community comment on changes made to the park of late, including but not limited to changes in trail lighting, changes in siting of garbage receptacles, changes in siting of amenities, changes in signing, and management of the golf course,

- *P&R has already reached out to the NECC and RJCC as well as all Community Councils through the FCC to inform them that a master planning effort by P&R for RJSP will begin in fall 2018. Arrangements have already been made to ensure that the NECC Parks Committee chair participates (i.e. she volunteered).*
- *Community comment is important – the master planning process will include public meetings/workshops, community council presentations, and an advisory group*
- *As for specifics such as the placement of trash cans, the public is welcome to provide input on such specifics but typically master plans are high-level plans and these types of items will get flushed out in the site development process, which will include public comment and an approval process which involves community councils and commissions*

NOW THEREFORE THE NECC HEREBY RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

In as much as the only community group to have addressed lighting levels on RJSP trail (via VIP Committee on expenditure of funds on playground at NRJSP, said playground opposed by the NECC) recommended a test placement of lunar-resonant lighting or other low intensity LED lighting on the North side paved trail, which recommendation was ignored by P&R, and as the replacement of the lamps in RJSP negotiated between ML&P and P&R called for “like for like” which in fact resulted in brighter lights in the park, and as ML&P advise that said LED’s intensity can be controlled remotely by ML&P, that P&R should immediately pursue a test regimen whereby various intensities on different segments of the park premiss can be tested, and that said tests be coordinate to the mutual satisfaction of representatives from the RJCC, the NECC, Skijax, Jr. Nordic, and other community organizations,

- *Per ML&P, the lights have been operating at 120% and have or will be reduced to 80% upon completion of electrical infrastructure upgrades providing “like for like” lighting as planned*
- *All relevant user groups will be engaged in the planning process*

In as much as there has been a wide disagreement as to what can or cannot be set forth in a Master Plan, as well as to the degree to which Master Plans can be ignored when it comes to planning for development, P&R is encouraged to conduct public workshops BEFORE the Master Plan process so as to clarify the purpose and usage of Master Plans, practically, legally, and theoretically.

- *The master planning process will include public meetings/workshops, community council presentations, and an advisory group; any clarification needed can easily be provided as part of this process*
- *Since the NECC has just gone through this process with the development of the Chanshtnu Muldoon Park Master Plan, an additional public workshops before the master plan process to talk about the master plan process may seem unnecessary and might be considered to be an excessive or inefficient use of public funds*
- *P&R recommends that anyone unfamiliar with the master planning process read the Chanshtnu Muldoon Park Master Plan or contact the NECC Parks Committee Chair to learn about the master planning process/“clarify the purpose and usage of Master Plan”*

In as much as the attitude of P&R has apparently repeatedly changed as far as its duty to solicit comment from the NECC, P&R is encouraged to appear before the NECC to specifically address its position on what it will, may, and need not address to the NECC’s attention, as well as an explanation for its failure to bring matters to the NECC’s attention with respect to RJSP over the past 5 years.

- *P&R has attended and/or presented to the NECC and Parks Committee over 10 times in the last two years*

In anticipation of the reopening of the RJSP Master Plan, NECC requests that P&R provide an historical analysis of the impact and efficacy of the Master Plans adopted for RJSP, including but not limited to the degree to which any and all development either was consistent with such plan, or involved an attempt to change the plan to suit the short term demands of the development proposed. Further, NECC expects a full and detailed explanation as to the motivation behind P&R’s apparent sudden interest in “revisiting” the RJSP Master Plan

- *As is common on a master plan project, an analysis will be conducted to review existing conditions and development history*
- *In regards to why P&R is "revisiting" the RJSP Master Plan – pretty much all parties would agree that it is time to update the 1979 master plan*

NECC applauds the efforts by P&R to use GIS applications to manage and share data regarding the use and maintenance of P&R resources, and encourages P&R and the MOA generally to involve the public to a greater degree in the planning and development of such applications, as the public promoted the use of such technology two decades ago.

At the present time the NECC opposes the building of new trails, or conversion of existing trails, to designed use mountain biking trails or single track trails in Russian Jack Springs Park (Reference RTP 2017 RJSP). NECC has not been consulted as to how the proposed trails will fall within the scope of the current Park Master Plan, those involved in the project have specifically not included NECC in planning or review of the project, despite municipal provision that mandate such participation, and the park is already heavily impacted such that its historic aesthetic is rapidly deteriorating. Bicycle traffic in the park is already moving too fast, and users at Kincaid have been cautioned about their speed, while others have written to the newspaper about issues with single track trails (see e.g., <https://www.adn.com/opinions/2017/05/02/no-more-single-track-trails-please/> and <https://www.adn.com/opinions/2017/08/31/singletrack-trails-in-far-north-spell-high-speed-collisions-with-bears/>). Publication of the plans was virtually non-existent as evidence by the application itself, and the project is moving too fast without adequate public review.

- *Regarding the proposed Single Track Trails for north RJSP, the project was presented to the NECC (by a project advocate and not P&R) and a motion of support of the project was provided at the May 21, 2015 NECC meeting (see attached)*
- *Regarding this final comment "the NECC opposes the building of new trails, or conversion of existing trails, to designed use mountain biking trails or single trail trails in Russian Jack Springs Park – the NECC provided a motion of support on May 21, 2015*
 - *It should be noted twice as many people voted "Yes" in support of the 2015 motion to allow trails than voted "Yes" to this resolution opposing them*

Done this 15 day of February 2018.

Yes Votes: 10 , No Votes: 0 , Abstentions: 2

President – Rick Irwin

Secretary – Kevin Smestad

Title 21

TITLE 21.05.040 COMMUNITY USES: DEFINITIONS AND USE-SPECIFIC STANDARDS

TITLE 21.05.040G.2 PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

2. PARK, PUBLIC OR PRIVATE

a. Definition

An area that is predominately open space, reserved for and designed to be used principally for active and/or passive recreation, and/or to serve ecological and aesthetic functions; any area designated as park by the assembly.

b. Use-Specific Standards in the Anchorage Bowl

i. Any master plan created for a municipal park shall be reviewed and approved as follows:

(A) For all park master plan proposals, the parks and recreation commission shall hold a public meeting, which shall include the opportunity for oral public comment.

(B) Master plans for parks classified by the Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan as community use area, special use area, or natural resource use area (over 30 acres) shall be approved by the planning and zoning commission.

(C) Master plans for parks classified by the Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan as neighborhood use area or natural resource use area (30 acres or fewer) shall be approved administratively by the director.

ii. All development projects in municipal parks require a site plan review, as follows:

(A) For all development projects in municipal parks, the parks and recreation commission shall hold a public meeting, which shall include the opportunity for oral public comments.

(B) Any minor discrepancies with an approved park master plan shall be described and justified. Significant discrepancies, as determined by the parks and recreation commission, require a change in the master plan.

(C) All development projects costing more than \$500,000 or disturbing more than one acre of land and in parks classified by the Anchorage

Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan as community use area, special use area, or natural resource use area (over 30 acres) shall be approved by major site plan review in accordance with 21.03.180D. For the purposes of this subsection, vegetation removal for public safety, natural resource protection and enhancement (such as invasive species removal and reforestation), ecosystem health, and general routine maintenance is not considered land disturbance.

(D) All development projects costing \$500,000 or less and disturbing one acre or less of land, and all development projects in parks classified by the Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan as neighborhood use area or natural resource use area (30 acres or fewer) shall be approved by administrative site plan review in accordance with 21.03.180C. Trails that are reviewed under section 21.03.190, Street and Trail Review, are exempt from this administrative site plan review. For the purposes of this subsection, vegetation removal for public safety, natural resource protection and enhancement (such as invasive species removal and reforestation), ecosystem health, and general routine maintenance is not considered land disturbance.

(E) The decision-making body shall determine whether standards of this title relating to paving of parking lots and lighting of parking lots shall be applied to a development project, considering the location and surrounding area of the project, and the anticipated level of use. If determined by the decision-making body, the paving and lighting standards for parking lots may be reduced or waived.

CHAPTER 21.03: REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCEDURES

21.03.020 COMMON PROCEDURES

6. COMMUNITY COUNCILS

When table 21.03-1 requires that notice be given to community councils, any officially recognized community council whose boundary includes any part of the subject property, and any additional such council whose boundary lies within 1,000 feet of any part of the subject property shall receive written (mailed) notice in accordance with H.3. above. Furthermore, the department shall provide notice to additional community councils in the following instances:

a. Each recognized community council within the municipality shall receive written notice where the subject parcel is one of the following regional public lands or facilities:

Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport; Merrill Field Airport; Birchwood Airport; Far North/Bicentennial Park; Kincaid Park; Russian Jack Springs Park; Beach Lake Park; Edmonds Lake Park; Bird Creek Regional Park; Chugach State Park; Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge; BLM tract(s) near Far North/Bicentennial Park.

b. If the subject parcel is a branch public facility that serves a specific delineated area, such as a public school or fire station, then any community council whose boundaries lie within the delineated district of service of a branch public facility shall receive written notice. This requirement shall only take effect after the municipality has established maps delineating areas of service for the type of branch facility, and has adopted procedures and responsibilities for updating service area boundaries.

c. Any community council whose boundaries lie beyond the minimum notification distance shall receive notice regarding proposals of potentially major scope or controversy that, in the opinion of the director, are likely to have a significant impact on the residents of the community council beyond the minimum notification distance.

d. Any community council within the impact area of a street or trail project, a neighborhood or district plan, or other area-specific element of the comprehensive plan, shall receive written notice. The impact area shall, at a minimum, include all community councils within 1,000 feet of the project/plan boundaries. The impact area shall include additional community councils if the recommendations in the project/plan affect specific public lands or facilities as provided in subsections 6.a. or 6.b. above, or are likely to impact residents beyond the minimum impact area, as provided in subsection 6.c. above.

e. All community councils shall receive notice of substantive amendments to the comprehensive plan (except as provided in subsection 6.d. above), and amendments to the text of title 21.