

# CHUGIAK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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March 24, 2011

Board of Supervisors  
Eagle River/Chugiak Parks and Recreation  
12001 Business Blvd. #123  
Eagle River, AK 99577

Dear Supervisors:

At our recent council meeting this month, the Chugiak Community Council discussed the issue of community councils and their consortia paying for the use of facilities such as the Eagle River Town Center.

We understand that there are both budgetary and manpower constraints at issue here, and we are sympathetic to these issues; however, we think it is important that the municipality maintain a strong and clear commitment to supporting and encouraging community councils as a fundamental part of good local governance.

We understand, agree and generally support "user fees" being charged under most circumstances for most organizations as a means of generating additional revenue over and above our property taxes. That being said we believe that in the final analysis, the Parks & Recreation Board of Supervisors erred when they inappropriately compared community councils and the consortium with social and non-profit organizations.

By Alaska statute, community councils do not qualify as being a person, place or thing. As such community councils are not considered similar to social clubs or nonprofit organizations—they are unique unto themselves and cannot be compared to any other group. They are, in fact, a basic right specified in Article II, the Bill of Rights of the Anchorage Municipal Charter:

*(3) The right to establish local community councils to assure maximum community self-determination, exercised in conjunction with others and without infringement upon the rights of other persons.*

Furthermore, Article VIII is dedicated to Community Councils. Section 8.01 provides for their establishment and procedures and reads:

*The assembly by ordinance shall provide for establishment of community councils to afford citizens an opportunity for maximum community involvement and self-determination. The ordinance shall include procedures for negotiation between the local government and each community council with respect to the duties and responsibilities of the community council.*

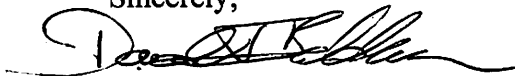
Community councils are expressly recognized as having a special relationship to local government and the assembly is required to provide for the establishment of these councils. The Bill of Rights of the Anchorage Municipal Charter also makes clear "the right to a locally directed, ongoing planning process that is based upon the community's goals, objectives and policies for the future." Such a right is manifest in the creation of a specific chapter for Chugiak-Eagle River in Title 21, as called for in a March 28, 2006, resolution of the Anchorage Assembly. Chapter 10 represents the group efforts of six community councils through their consortium.

Because the charter makes clear this special status of community councils, we are not convinced that the Eagle River/Chugiak Parks and Recreation Board of Supervisors is the correct forum in which to determine what is the appropriate amount of meetings for community councils and their consortia let alone whether or not these entities should pay a user fee for a municipal facility such as the Eagle River Town Center. Moreover, attempting to require councils to pay for "additional meetings *when* needed more than one a month" sends a message that is fundamentally at odds with the Anchorage Municipal Charter. We are concerned that such negative messages could contribute over the long term to a gradual erosion of the importance of the role of community councils and the thousands of volunteer hours they facilitate. We therefore respectfully request that the Eagle River/Chugiak Parks and Recreation Board of Supervisors reconsider its recent decision and continue to make the Eagle River Town Center and other facilities available to community councils and their consortia for no fee.

At the same time, we understand that John Rodda and his staff face a specific issue in regard to security at the Eagle River Town Center. We understand that the fee is in part proposed as a means of preventing people from meeting too frequently at night because it creates the need for him and/or another staff member to return to the center to secure the facility. We would like to focus on this issue as the real problem to be solved and we do not believe that charging fees for community councils or the Consortium of Chugiak-Eagle River Community Councils to meet fixes this issue; it does not, for example, reimburse John Rodda for his time or the inconvenience of having to return to the facility at night. Therefore, we would like to discuss alternatives such as potentially tapping the police department to secure the building or putting reasonable parameters on meeting times.

At our recent council meeting, participants overwhelmingly spoke highly of John Rodda and his commitment to this community. We do not want to see any more burden put on him individually— He already has given far more than his job requires. We instead look forward to resolving this matter in a way that meets your needs but continues to strongly encourage residents to gather through community councils and their consortia to make our community a better place.

Sincerely,



David Baldwin  
President  
Chugiak Community Council

cc: John Rodda, Debbie Ossiander, Bill Starr