

RUSSIAN JACK COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

6:30 PM, Wednesday, March 13, 2019

At Redemption Church Pine Street & 6th Avenue

Present: Ed Leach, Fred McLeary, Kendra Kloster, Bill Wielechowski, Ivy Spohnholz, Geran Tarr, Kathy & Bob Skaats, Talitha Chiesa, Sophia Chiesa, Pete Peterson, Kathleen Plunkett, Renea Miller, Sonia Lipke, Elisa Snelling, Forrest Dunbar, Beth Nordlund, Dan Wright & Sherry Wright

Meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm by Chair Ed Leach.

1. Legislative report -

Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson – no report

Sen. Bill Wielechowski – Budget hearings are going on. Lots of cuts have been made. Marine Highway hearing had the most people ever sign up to testify. The legislature will not pass the governor's budget anywhere near what he is proposing. It will be interesting to see how the gap is closed. Bill provided lots of numbers - his office can provide more details. No one spoke in support of the governor's budget. He will be in Anchorage March 23 from 10 am to 11 am at the Denny's on DeBarr and Bragaw. It appears that the legislators will work together. Bill said he's seen more cooperation between the aisles than he has in a long time.

Sen. Tom Begich (Joshua Spring) – no report

Rep. Geran Tarr - Couple thoughts about the budget. Administratively it ends up costing more money (Medicaid work requirements was an example). They are interested in new approaches, but they didn't get the budget until February 13th (instead of in December when they usually do). There are many that are uncertain about their future funding, which also affects businesses (Coastal communities affected by the marine highway was the issue there). Alaska has a very fragile economy, as we have many fewer taxes to draw from. They are very limited in the income to the state. The budget has created a lot of instability with lots of unknowns. PFD is one aspect, but they have a large balancing act in trying to address the budget gap. The legislators would have liked a softer landing, but there is a problem that needs to be addressed. Municipal League has come out in unison against the proposed budget. Many have absolutely no way to pick up the slack. Public safety – continued work on the sexual assault and looking at loopholes in statutes to do more. They will try to work on things that have broad support. Geran suggested sending a resolution to help chart a course for the future of our state. The house created a committee on tribal affairs.

Rep. Ivy Spohnholz - This will be the last time she speaks on bi-partisan collaboration. Geran and she joined a coalition in the house that consists of Democrats, Republicans and Independents. A couple issues of importance of the budget is a lot of cost shifting to local communities that reductions in school would cost \$1400 per household in increased taxes. A couple other cuts in Senior Benefits program with the lowest income level. These are seniors living on around \$950 per month and the benefit is about \$250 per month that many seniors use for prescriptions or heating bills in the winter. Medicaid is one of the key ways to address the opioid problem and many in the criminal justice system have some type of addiction problem. There is pretty wide spread opposition to the governor's budget. They will work with last year's budget, review the governor's proposed budget and review line item issues to define potential cuts. They will also be looking at reforms that will help over the long term. The reforms that resulted from SB 74 (Medicaid reform bill) have proved a savings, so they will be looking at another Medicaid reform bill. Ed made a note regarding Medicaid expansion in Alaska that it

needs some revisions in Alaska law in order to continue under the law. Some of the governor's changes would require several law changes. The governor has not introduced any legislation to cover any of those needed changes. The hold harmless program comes out of PFD. One of the programs Dunleavy is looking to end is Tribal Needy Family program.

Rep. Andy Josephson – no report

Kendra Kloster – says hi. One comment for legislators is looking to the tribes when they are considering these issues. There are lots of great partnerships that can be made.

2. Assembly report

Pete Petersen – Vote by mail election ballots went out yesterday. Keep an eye out for those. 243-8683 is the number to call if you have not received them yet. Assembly had them printed in Washington state. Downtown Anchorage will be a separate tax district with a 12% tax abatement offered for new housing. Approved a zoning changes on Upper DeArmour from R-8 to R-10 zoning. Next Tuesday agenda includes whether they want to ban certain flame-retardant chemicals. Most states are following California in this. Affects children but also fire fighters and first responders. Voted to move Student Transportation facility to a new location. Mr Traini has term limited and introduced two ideas regarding cigarettes. Raise legal age to buy cigarettes to 21 and must be 20 feet from schools to smoke. AMAT special meeting on Monday looking at 2040 transportation plan.

Forrest Dunbar – There was one School Board candidate who never filled out his APOC properly. He may get an APOC fine, but there will be a leaflet explaining why he is on the ballot at all included in the ballots being mailed. The Assembly is going to treat the budget as if it has been passed and will go into their first quarter budget making revisions accordingly. Reduction of services will be part of that. Three proposals dealing with the Downtown district – reapportionment will probably happen in the early part of this decade. Rotating Russian Jack may become part of the Downtown District. Create 11 single member districts. Increase Anchorage Assembly to 12 members. If/when downtown member is out, they would be left unrepresented. The reapportionment will require a charter amendment. Bars may be opening an hour earlier with an amendment from Traini that will only pass if the alcohol tax passes. Bars currently open at 10 am and close at 2 am.

Kathleen Plunkett asked for more information about Proposition 11 – We were told that this is a system that is already being done. The Assembly members suggested that George Martinez may be a good contact for more detailed information.

Question from Dan Wright about the 12% tax abatement. The combination of price of land gets in the way of development. There hasn't been any new construction downtown for years. New housing will allow 12 years tax free (but still would pay for the tax on the land). There has been some discussion of doing that in Mountain View also. They started with downtown – important for the whole city to have a vibrant downtown.

Beth Nordlund asked about Proposition 8 – we were told that it basically allows the sale of MLP to Chugach.

3. Mayor's Report – George Martinez – no report

3. School board report – Elisa Snelling (snelling_elisa@asdk12.org) – Annual budget passed a couple meetings ago. If the state lowers the amount of education funding, there is a reduction in

property taxes that correlates to that. Title 1 is being held harmless. There are 1000 displaced students from the November earthquake. She spoke about the school bond proposal.

Beth Nordlund – Anchorage Parks Foundation – Propositions 2, 4 & 5. Beth provided a handout that showed the 2019 bond projects listed out. She was excited to know about the Bragaw storm drainage having a potential positive impact to Chester Creek (we hope it will improve it). Challenge Grant- a great way to reach out to the community. They like a wide variety of proposals. This is funded through Rasmusson Foundation.

4. Principal Alana Haider, Wonder Park – no report

5. FCC James Smallwood – no report

6. Ed Leach spoke about his work with Gideon's. They are not allowed to go into most schools anymore. They let the principal know about their activities near school properties. Ed related his experience of a confrontation from the school library. Because of that experience Ed spoke with someone at the MOA and learned that sidewalks are not public right of ways. They belong to whoever owns the underlying land. The library was on school district, not municipal land. 1 ½ foot off the curb is public land. If you hand out free stuff, you need a permit. Ed's point was that Anchorage laws about public property are different than other places in the US.

Discussion pursued regarding cleaning off the sidewalk and then the city plows snow back on private property sidewalks and that private citizens are responsible if someone falls on their sidewalk.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by: Sherry Wright