

Rogers Park Community Council
Meeting Minutes
7 PM Monday, October 14, 2019
****BP Energy Center****

Board members present: Janet Bidwell (President), Steve Lindbeck (Secretary), and Ric Wilson (Treasurer).

I. Welcome

(Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm – quorum attained.)

II. Approval of Minutes for September 9, 2019

Dave McCargo moved to adopt, and Ric Wilson seconded. No objection.

III. Treasurer's Report

Ric Wilson reported the council account contains \$188.67.

IV. FCC Report

Steve Lindbeck reported on Federation of Community Councils meeting of September 18, 2019. Assembly Chair Felix Rivera and School Board Member Margo Bellamy gave updates. Planning department's Ryan Yelle described two proposed ordinances: landscaping requirements, and lot coverage exemption for front porches open on three sides. Tanya Iden of Agnew Beck presented on Vision Zero, a project to improve safety on streets and roads.

V. RPCC Survey Results

Heather Ireland reported on the 2019 capital improvement survey process and provided a summary of results (attached below). The municipality provides the list of projects and makes rankings based on responses at public meetings, community council input, and internal judgments. She said the overall list has changed little over the past 10 years, largely because many projects have not been funded. Projects occasionally are added to the list but rarely deleted. In general, advocacy from the community council carries more weight than that from individuals. State Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson recommended contacting Assembly members to help influence the rankings.

VI. Representative Report(s)

Assembly Member Meg Zaletel:

Meg Zaletel introduced a newsletter now being produced by her and Assembly Member Felix Rivera. She discussed concerns about homeless issues; fire apparatus going offline when personnel call in sick; Midtown congestion relief (noting her own

conflict of interest as an Ingra Street property owner); and Assembly decisions to put two proposals on the April ballot: onsite marijuana consumption, and revisions to Assembly districts creating six 2-person districts. She noted with appreciation the six-month anniversary of her Assembly service.

Assembly Member Felix Rivera:

Felix Rivera addressed utilities and budget issues. The Assembly has approved a \$1.5 million loan to move forward with a stormwater utility. \$500,000 would pay for expert consultants to recommend options for the utility rate structure, management, and boundaries. The other \$1 million would fund operations for the first three years, after which the new utility should be able to repay the loan. The municipal attorney has been representing the municipality before the Regulatory Commission of Alaska in ML&P-Chugach Electric merger proceedings. Rate increases are part of the approved Solid Waste Services master plan, which includes a new central transfer station. He indicated SWS rates have not increased for a long time. Anchorage-based consultants studying the Port of Alaska expansion have indicated costs for the project can be reduced by \$600 million to \$900 million below the prior estimates of \$2 billion. The challenge remains to put together port project finances from federal and other sources. The municipal budget and 6-year capital improvement plan will be considered over the next month, with a budget vote expected in late November.

Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson (SD-1):

Sen. Gray-Jackson remarked that of the nine community councils in her former Assembly district, Rogers Park Community Council is among the most active. She noted HB126 designating November as Alaska Native Heritage Month, which she sponsored in the Senate and which gained 55-1 overall legislative support. She expressed approval for the University of Alaska Board of Regents' 9-2 vote to cease consideration of separate accreditation for UAA, UAF, and UAS. Feedback from faculty and students was to slow the process and listen to stakeholders. She said there had been no assurance a single accreditation would save money.

Representative Andy Josephson (HD-17):

Rep. Josephson expressed concern about an unusually supportive letter from Gov. Dunleavy to a potential Pebble Mine investor; Rep. Josephson generated a letter in response signed by 20 legislators. Rep. Josephson wrote a newspaper op-ed objecting to the governor's partial veto of the court system budget and another op-ed objecting to the governor's approach to public employee union representation. He has been involved in Medicaid funding issues, noting the governor's veto of Medicaid funding also eliminated twice as much in federal funds; a \$9 million state cut resulted in the loss of \$27 million worth of dental care. He shared the sensitivities about university accreditation and noted that university budget pressures had increased friction between legislators from different regions.

VII. Committee Reports

A. Crime and Safety Committee

Gretchen Cuddy reported on trail patrols, creek pollution, and mapping of fires on the Hillside. Julie Bleier distributed a draft resolution urging the Municipality “to assure adequate emergency shelter for illegal camp abatement, effective prevention and enforcement of public nuisance and criminal laws for illegal camp abatement and public accountability.” She indicated the goal is to protect the greenbelts and creeks, and that other community councils are joining in support. The committee wants the Rogers Park Community Council to vote on the resolution in November.

B. Midtown Congestion Relief

Bob Butera updated us on planning for reconstruction of the Seward Highway from Tudor Road to 20th Avenue, seen as one of the state’s busiest and most hazardous corridors. The project would impact Rogers Park directly, especially since the favored option currently envisions taking homes and property from the west side of Ingra Street.

Last month the project options were narrowed to essentially a package of five smaller projects to improve intersections at Tudor, 36th Avenue, Benson Boulevard, Northern Lights Boulevard, and Fireweed Lane. Steve Noble from DOWL Engineering gave a lengthy account of public outreach and engagement processes, including phone calls and knocking on the doors of affected property owners. Public meetings are scheduled for the next several weeks. Final comments would be back about December 1, then the final report would be completed and the projects could be added to the statewide transportation improvement program.

The effort is still in early planning phases; Noble said no construction is imminent for probably 2-3 years. When this report is completed, there will be subsequent environmental planning and public involvement through standard federal processes. Funding for the project ultimately would be mostly federal, but has not been identified so far. Noble suggested the first small projects to be addressed most likely would be surface improvements at 36th Avenue, then improvements at all the affected intersections, but also stressed nothing has been decided yet. At the north end, the current recommendation would include a bridge over Chester Creek, improving bike and pedestrian flow under the Seward Highway.

Note: Midtown Congestion Relief Open House is scheduled for November 12, 2019, at Z.J. Loussac Library, 3600 Denali Street. Presentations are at 3:30 PM and 6:00 PM; doors are open from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM.

VIII. Presentation: Census 2020

Susan Hecks from the U.S. Census Bureau presented on plans for the 2020 decennial census, stressing the importance of getting a complete count of all residents in Alaska. Census counts help determine congressional representation and legislative districts, as well as federal funding flows in a great many programs and departments. Private businesses also use census information to help locate facilities and forecast markets. She said the State of Alaska currently receives more than \$3,000 per person in federal funding – and repeated one estimate indicating as many as 200,000 Alaskans were not counted in the 2010 census, with as much as \$2 billion of funding lost. (The 2010 census counted 737,438 people in Alaska.)

By longstanding tradition, the entire U.S. Census begins in western rural Alaska. Next year the census will begin in Toksook Bay with a survey of the oldest elder in the village. The decennial census has started in Alaska every 10 years since 1880.

Residents will get notices starting in mid-March to go online to fill out forms, then will receive repeated reminders. Around the end of April, census-takers will start knocking on doors of those who haven't filled out forms online.

The Census Bureau will be hiring hundreds of people in each community to complete the work; pay is \$28 to \$31 per hour. The bulk of the jobs will be from mid-May through July; hours are flexible and part-time. People are preferred who know the neighborhoods they will be surveying. Go online at the U.S. Department of Commerce to apply.

IX. Announcements and Member Comments

- A. Julie Bleier will serve as alternate representative to the Federation of Community Councils.
- B. Elvi Gray-Jackson suggested the resolution on illegal camp abatement might be more effective if it starts by mentioning positive efforts of the municipality to address the problems and proceeds to more negative aspects of the issues.

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 PM.

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