

Spenard Community Council Minutes
August 4, 2004

Call to Order

The Spenard Community Council began its August meeting with approval of the minutes from the June meeting (There was no July meeting).

Assembly Reports

Chairman Traini presented the Assembly report for this month. The Assembly is on its "summer schedule" meeting every other week.

At their last meeting they approved a revenue bond issue of \$6 million to fix the roof of the PAC. Past attempts to increase taxes had not passed. Users of the PAC will pay for revenue issue through increased ticket prices. As most are aware, the PAC roof is in very bad shape; maintenance staff are currently using 55 gallon drums to collect water coming through the leaking roof.

August will be a busy month for the Assembly. The following issues are planned before the Assembly:

Anchorage School District – school bonds are slated to be introduced at the next meeting with testimony/action planned for September.

Dog control – reauthorization of dog parks

Day care issues

Aggressive panhandling ordinance – Dan Sullivan may have two nights of testimony on this issue (August 17 & 18)

The Assembly chair fielded questions about the increasing littering problem and a request to ban smoking in municipal vehicles.

Conditional Use application; Manrique's Brasserie

Manrique's Brasserie is applying for a conditional use permit to serve alcohol at the former Atlasta Deli location (36th and Arctic). This location is not technically in the SCC since the formation of the Midtown Council. No one showed up to speak on this issue.

Tudor & Wilson/Cambridge Intersection

The Anchorage Daily news recently ran a story about the recent fatality at this intersection involving a motorcycle and a small car. It has been known by nearby residents to be a very dangerous intersection for a long time.

A large number of neighbors showed up to discuss possible solutions to reduce the hazards presented by this intersection for both vehicles and pedestrians. Rep. Eric Croft, Rosemary Karish (on behalf of Rep. Ethan Berkowitz) and Assembly members Dick Traini and Dan Sullivan were in attendance to hear local concerns.

Two different issues appeared to be of the greatest concern to neighbors; vehicle traffic control and pedestrian access. This intersection had, according to a number of residents, received state funding for a light. At the time the funding was received however the School District opposed a lighted intersection because students would use the crosswalk instead of the elevated walkway to get back and forth across Tudor. Other options that were discussed included making the intersection a right turn only intersection, complete blocking with a median across Tudor, left turns off Tudor to Wilson and Cambridge but no crossing traffic, and improving visibility on the south side of the intersection by clearing foliage to the west and east of the Cambridge side of the intersection. A request was made of Chairman Traini to have a work session at next month's council meeting to include the Municipality's traffic engineer. Many residents mentioned that the problem has been studied for years and has implications to traffic flow beyond this intersection. The main goal is a workable solution that will reduce the danger to everyone and improve traffic flow.

Boettcher Subdivision

The new owner, Urson, of Lots 1&2 (Old Vagabond Trailer Park) next to Gwennie's presented his plan for developing the property into long-term parking. He offered copies of a rough site plan that includes development of the small front lot as a business (rental car business) with the large rear lot dedicated to long-term parking. He stated that he has talked with Traffic and they do not have a problem with his tentative site plan. An alternate development plan could include building condos on the rear property.

Peggy Auth, P&Z Committee chair, stated that the city would hold the new owner to a road easement to Lot 3 (Maple Ridge subdivision). Development of this property has been a big issue for many years. It's development is tied to development plans for the adjoining Maple Ridge subdivision and must include specific plans for access, storm water and traffic impacts to Northwood Drive. Ten or more years ago the property had been rezoned based on input from the community council. Members discussed the similarities of this proposal to that of Maple Ridge, i.e., a developer presents an incomplete plan to the council for approval while also soliticing broad input about ideas that might be acceptable for development of a property. The new owner is planning to work with Tim Potter at Dowl Engineering on a more specific development proposal.

Council members offered acceptable development options that include small shops catering to the improved tourist trade, business like the Harley shop or Gwennie's, coffee shops or a bistro. Great concern was expressed about a long-term parking lot with concertina wire and tall fences after so much of Spenard Road has finally been redeveloped into more attractive/friendlier looking businesses.

The council did not act on the request for approval of the Boettcher subdivision proposal.

Lake Spenard Beach Park

Recently have been letters-to-editor in the Daily News about swimmers at the Lake Spenard Beach Park. We have also heard about the police being called to take swimmers out of the lake because they were too close to airplane traffic.

A number of residents had comments about the Lake Spenard Beach Park and their historic use of the facility. Dan Sullivan provided some of the funding history related to Parks and Rec's elimination of the life guard position at the beach.

The problem goes basically as follows: The municipality had posted 'No Swimming' signs after the lifeguard position was de-funded. Swimmers who have used the park for decades have kept swimming. Float plane traffic continues to increase on the Lake as Lake Spenard is the busiest floatplane lake in the world. Funding is not likely to return for lifeguard positions.

Council members recommended the following solution to the Assembly members in attendance; Change the signs to state 'Swim at your own risk, no lifeguard on duty', place an outer ring of warning buoys to demark the floatplane taxi way, set an inner ring of buoy's with a barrier rope to enclose the common swimming area. Assembly members Sullivan and Traini will talk with the appropriate people about whether this will adequately cover the municipality's liability concerns.

Pop Carr Skating Rink Proposal

Steve Hennesey from the Willowcrest PTA was available to discuss the skating rink proposal from last month. A number of ideas were again discussed about location for a rink, alternate uses of the Tennis Court area, and the need to meet with surrounding property owners and the local homeowner's groups. Steve plans to meet with Windemere and Birchwood homeowners this month and will report back to the council in September.

Committee Reports

Westside Patrol Report:

Sam O'Connor reported on street vandalism, a recent interview with Channel 11 News regarding the new "John Law", the sting operation related to the "John Law", and the decline in sexual assaults since the community patrol has increased its focus on the downtown area. A recent block party on Rika Drive (Russian Jack area) was very successful and it may be a model for other areas to use in addressing you violence. There has been a rash of parking meter vandalism by a group of homeless people. Web Cameras will soon be installed on the Channel 11 tower as part of the ongoing project to reduce prostitution and drug related activities along Spenard Road.

More volunteers are needed for the community patrol. The Westside Patrol recently lost 2 volunteers and is down to a total of 10 active members. Any amount of time that someone can volunteer will be greatly appreciated.

A discussion followed Sam's reported about some of the legal concerns that arise from the new "John Law". It will probably not be legal to publish the names of those arrested under the new law until a conviction actually occurs. Many expressed a desire to use the publishing of names as a deterrent to such activities, but, there are also legal issues that must be adhered to in protecting the rights individuals prior to a trial.

Planning & Zoning Report:

Peggy Auth reported that the Northwood Park renovation has begun. Completion is expected in September. Other work on Northwood Drive is expected to begin soon with a focus on geo-engineering. Recent work with P&Z and the geo-engineer has been very successful pointing the long known storm water/flooding issues in the Maple Ridge and Northwood area.

The owner of PJ's presented the landscaping plans for the lots that he recently leased next to his business. Three new street lights, landscaping and a new paved parking lot will be a significant improvement to the area.

The Beartooth Parking issue was discussed. We recently found out the permit had been pulled related the parking lot/landscaping work that was planned for this summer. The best information we have indicates that it may have been action of the owner to defer the parking lot work until after a possible deal is resolved to acquire the old Space Station property. Many felt that the parking lot issues have priority for the council and that redevelopment of the Space Station, although important, should not further delay resolution of the parking lot landscaping and improvements.

The Spinelli coffee cart is still illegal and trees have been removed illegally in its vicinity.

The Title 21 Rewrite Project is ongoing and will be coming up before the Assembly soon. These are the land use regulations which will implement the Comprehensive Plan. The city is still looking for volunteers to work on this project and those interested in helping out can contact the Municipality's Planning Department.

Old Business

Tom McGrath provided new letters for the Chair in response to the request from the Governor's Officer related to the two derelict buildings near Spenard and Benson. The Governor's Office, in June, requested a third resolution from the SCC supporting demolition of these same buildings. The Chair will send the letters and continue to attempt to work with the Governor's Office on this issue.

The council approved the proposal by PJ's owner for approval of the new landscaping plan.

Next Wednesday, August 11th, at 2pm will be the official turnover of the property at 32nd & Spenard to Habitat for Humanity.

Homeowners in the Lois Drive area expressed concerns about future work in their area. A STOP sign was requested for the Lois & 33rd intersection and several comments were made about the problems with the 36th & Lois intersection.

Upcoming Meeting Schedule

The next scheduled meeting will be September 1st at 7pm.