

Rogers Park Community Council Meeting Minutes DRAFT

Meeting: Monday, 9 Nov 2020, 7:00pm – 9:18pm

Zoom meeting was called to order by Steve Lindbeck, President at 7:02pm.

Mark Foster, Secretary, confirmed by zoom attendance count, 19 RPCC members were in attendance. (Quorum requirement = 15 members).

President Lindbeck offered the minutes from 12 October 2020 and asked for approval by unanimous consent, and hearing no objections, President Steve Lindbeck announced the minutes approved.

Mark Foster, Secretary, confirmed by zoom attendance count that 3 more members joined the meeting at 7:04pm, for a new total of 22 members in attendance.

President Lindbeck proceeded with calling on committee reports.

Committee Reports

There was no APD report this meeting.

In the **Crime and Safety Committee** report, Linda Chase, chair, expressed concern about the deaths that occurred among the homeless population in the neighborhood and the continued presence of people who don't live in the neighborhood camping out, jaywalking, and soliciting cigarettes from pedestrians at the intersections adjacent to Rogers Park.

Pete and Karin Mjos reported that they had encountered camps, including one with an open fire that they reported to the Fire Department, in their walks along the Chester Creek greenbelt.

Representative Harriet Drummond expressed an interest in looking into whether landscaping and “all way” intersections similar to those in Seattle [an idea Seattle imported from its neighbors in British Columbia], at Tudor and Northern Lights and the Highway might help reduce jaywalking.

Linda Chase asked “if people don't know they are ill, what is the recourse, how can we help them?”

In the Garden and Beautification report, Meg Zaletel offered that Zack Zaletel, chair, was going to assemble a list of holiday light displays in the neighborhood for those who might be interested in being included in a holiday lights walking map of the neighborhood. If you would like to be included, please e-mail Zack your address at zzaletel@gmail.com

In the Midtown Congestion Relief (MCR) committee report, Bob Butera, reported “nothing new.” He understood that DOT was working on putting together a community outreach project to “envision” Mid Town Anchorage through DOWL Engineering, but that he did not have firm dates yet.

Mark Foster, Secretary, confirmed by zoom attendance count that 8 more members joined the meeting at 7:18pm, for a new total of 30 members in attendance.

Representative Harriet Drummond encouraged those who may be interested to consider consulting the MidTown Planning Process Binders from the 2003-2008 era. She would pass those along to Bob Butera for his review.

Marilyn Pillifant reported on the traffic engineering department response to prior requests for traffic calming in the neighborhood. She indicated that the traffic engineers had set a threshold that required average speeds in excess of 6 mph over the speed limit and at least 500 vehicles over a study period before they would recommend consideration of traffic calming measures, e.g., speed bumps. The engineers could take a fresh look at a location if had been at least three years since their prior traffic study.

There was a suggestion that we wait until traffic was “back to normal” before we sought any traffic calming measures so we could enhance the prospects that the locations considered might meet the traffic engineering minimums for a speed bump.

Additional discussion was offered that readily visible stop signs had helped to reduce some of the traffic concerns on Zarvis Place (adjacent to Rogers Park Elementary School).

Pete Mjos asked about the status of the resolution in support of traffic calming measures on East 24th (between Galewood and Maplewood) and thanked Assembly Chair Felix Rivera for his support in working with the traffic engineering staff. Assembly Chair Rivera indicated that East 24th had been slated for study next year (2021) and a recommendation for action, if supported by the study, for the following year (2022).

Marilyn Pillifant indicated she would add that to her list to track its progress.

There was nothing new to report from the ADU Committee.

Representative Reports

Representative Andy Josephson (House District 17) highlighted

- He was re-elected and expressed his appreciation for the support of his constituents.
- Redistricting of State House and State Senate seats would be coming up as an issue over the next 2 years.
- He was actively involved with the Therapeutic Courts Task Force and observed that it lacked the resources it needed to effectively provide treatment and support for those who could benefit from it.
- The Legislative Budget & Audit Committee recently met to review COVID-19 related appropriations issues and Gubernatorial allocations within the appropriations authority granted by the Legislature.
- The Administration’s Department of Law, Civil Division, was involved in contract issues related to the Janus decision. He expressed concern that the Administration was ignoring Legislative guidance on these issues.
- He was continuing to work on a “reverse sweep” bill that would clarify that not all accounts, e.g., PCE (an account on the order of \$1 billion that is the source of on the order of \$30 million in annual revenue for payments to rural electric utilities to help mitigate the high cost of electricity for rural residential customers who tend to rely on diesel fired electric generators), need to be swept each year as part of the end of year accounting between the Governor as administrator and the Legislature as appropriator.

- He wanted to encourage everyone to follow the continuing vote counting after the November 3rd election day – as he expected the full counting of all of the early and absentee voting would “change everything”. He expressed hope that the Legislators from the “we can’t afford a \$7000 dividend payout” camp might be able to form a narrow majority.
- Pete Mjos interjected to ask Representative Josephson for an update on UA & UAA management team transitions and financial outlook.
 - Representative Josephson expressed:
 - his support for Pat Pitney, interim UA System President, who was the UA System CFO and recently served as the director of the Legislature’s Finance Division, as a consensus builder who was bringing the campuses back together and ensuring that each campus was getting its share of the budget reductions slated in the “compact” struck between the Governor and the Board of Regents.
 - his appreciation for UAA Chancellor Cathy Sandeen’s service on behalf of the Anchorage community
 - his concern that the FY2022 budget development process will begin anew in January and present serious challenges for UAA in light of continued cuts slated in the “compact.”
- Ron Alleva interjected that while the University has been “begging for money”, its auction program has been outsourced to the University of Wisconsin and underperforming. “How can we support the University if they send money outside” and don’t get good results? Mr. Alleva offered that his auction service is much more successful at generating margin on surplus equipment. Why do they send the auction business outside when they have superior options here in State?

Representative Harriet Drummond (House District 18) highlighted:

- She was re-elected and was looking forward to seeing the complete results of the election and how that might impact the organization of the Legislature
- She indicated that the Legislature could review Mr. Alleva’s concerns about the University’s auction system for its surplus equipment in the University Subcommittee where the Legislature could ask questions of the Board of Regents and the University President about those concerns.
- She shared Representative Josephson’s concerns about the Governor’s recommendation to sweep all funds at the end of the fiscal year – since it appears to compromise the fiscal management of funds for maximum sustainable yield – illuminating the concern by highlighting the University Higher Education Fund which provides scholarships for students – and rather than sweep it every year we should consider the value it can provide our students by managing the fund for maximum sustainable yield rather than artificial end of the fiscal year deadlines.
- As a member of the Health, Education and Social Services (HESS) committee, she had heard testimony from epidemiologists, public health specialists and hospitals from around the state and she was terrified of the surge in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations that they see coming around the State, with particularly heightened concerns coming out of Bethel and the Mat-Su on top of the devastating outbreak in Chevak which over ran the local clinic and regional hospital where severe cases had been put into a holding pattern for 18 hours while they waited for beds to free up in Fairbanks and Anchorage.

- She was worried about COVID-19 issues in anticipation of the reconvening of the Legislature where she expected the Legislature would vote on allowing remote voting. She was worried that virtual meetings and voting might be slow and cumbersome compared to in-person meetings.
- Linda Chase interjected and wanted to encourage Legislators to work together and listen to each other more, citing Senator Stevens as a strong personality, as reflected in his Mr. Hulk ties, who was also a great compromiser.
- Sara Dykstra expressed fear that the public was not changing its behavior to help reduce the spread of COVID. We want our kids back in school, we need to get our numbers down. Many parents and kids are struggling.
- Representative Drummond concurred and highlighted that Women are quitting jobs to help manage children, putting a strain on their family incomes. We need to get back to tougher mandates. The Valley needs to get the message that they need to wear masks. Mt. Edgecombe is beginning have issues. She was concerned that the Governor missed an opportunity to take decisive leadership when he limited his extension of the public health emergency declaration to only 30 days. She was unimpressed with the Governor’s approach to public health – we need a statewide mask mandate to help reduce COVID.

Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson (Senate District I) highlighted:

- She was re-elected and would continue to work to represent **everyone** in her district
- Unemployment benefit payments were due to be distributed on November 13th
- She was concerned that the Governor’s extension of the Emergency Declaration for only 30 days was a missed opportunity to reduce uncertainty about what’s next for everyone involved
- She acknowledged receipt of letters in support of a special session and she was sympathetic to the call for and was an advocate of a Legislative special session but did not see adequate support from across the Legislature for it to go forward
- She was concerned that our first responders and health care workers were putting in an extraordinary effort to help during the pandemic and needed more support – social, economic, political and moral support
- Additional information is available via Elvi’s Updates, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/SenatorElviGrayJackson/>

School Board Member Margo Bellamy was not in attendance.

Assembly Member Meg Zaletel highlighted:

- The Municipality had updated its COVID data dashboard
- The Assembly was moving into budget season and there was a lot of interest in the new Alcohol tax slated to go into effect on February 1, 2021 and is expected to bring in roughly \$12 million.
 - The administration’s proposal was not what the Assembly had expected.
 - She was taking the time to go through the details around the estimated costs of administration, including tax collections, ballot proposal, accounting and reporting, and the administrations evidenced-based review of the effectiveness of the programs developed with the alcohol tax.

- She expected the alcohol tax would be split into three buckets of about \$4 million each within the board categories of:
 - First Responders and prosecutors
 - Child Abuse, Prevention and Early Literacy
 - Mental health and substance abuse
- For those interested, she recommended they review the appendices related to the alcohol tax in the Administration’s budget proposal, she posted a link in the chat box for those who were interested

Assembly Chair Felix Rivera highlighted:

- The ML&P sale to Chugach Electric closed and Chugach Electric was signing up ML&P customers
- The budget process was underway with a public hearing tomorrow night (Tuesday, November 10th)
- He expected a lot of testimony on the new Alcohol tax.
- The mill levy was expected to increase on the order of \$100 on the annual property tax assessment of a \$350,000 home.
- The Assembly was scheduled to vote on an extension of the Public Health Emergency Declaration on November 16th.
- In Friday’s Public Health Emergency Orders, the limitation on gatherings was lowered to 10 and exemptions were tightened

RPCC Member Questions and Comments for the Assembly:

- Ron Alleva expressed concerns about the use of COVID funding for homeless services, cited concerns that the well intentioned restrictions placed on homeless service centers would eventually be eroded by variances and the local neighbors would be left with local problems
- Assembly Member Zaletel offered that she successfully sponsored amendments to the homeless and treatment services plans to address the concerns raised by Mr. Alleva
- Assembly Chair Rivera offered that the process is far from over – additional due diligence and review and associated opportunities to assess and address the concerns raised by Mr. Alleva will be available
- Ron Alleva hoped that the concerns of the treatment center neighbors would be heard
- Michael Savitt expressed anger over Assembly’s actions which he viewed as “disconnected from the community” on: 1) the need for emergency orders around public health initiatives and the homeless, 2) the need to hold a special election for a new Mayor to fill an elected vacancy that lasts more than 90 days
- Assembly Chair Rivera responded:
 - He concurred that the use of emergency powers declarations could be transitioned to “non-emergency” Municipal Code provisions and he was working with the Administration and Assembly on crafting a transition
 - He reiterated that the Assembly had received a 7 page legal memo outlining the Assembly’s legal options on how to fill the elected Mayor vacancy, a memo crafted by a team of lawyers including a lawyer from former Mayor Sullivan’s legal team, that provided that the Assembly had three legal options from which to choose and they

chose the option that was seen as the least disruptive in light of the pandemic public health challenges and least expensive in light of their continued fiduciary responsibilities.

- Assembly Member Zaletel further highlighted the need to give consideration to the need to minimize disruption and uncertainty in our community in light of the many challenges families face during the pandemic. She described her own situation as a working parent in a household with two working parents with school age children. Like many households who had taken on the responsibility of caring for their school age children full time last spring when school buildings were closed due to the pandemic, she was hopefully waiting to see when school would reopen in the fall. She and her husband appreciated the school district's use of a clear risk matrix for parents to be able to see when students might be allowed to return to in-person schooling in the fall when community transmission levels were below the designated red line threshold. This allowed parents to assess the pandemic trends and make plans for how to juggle their many household responsibilities. The need to reduce uncertainty and disruptions during the pandemic were a very real consideration for many, including parents of school age children.

New Business

Mark Foster moved and Jim Wright seconded a motion to approve a Resolution in Support of the Municipality of Anchorage providing an independent transparent public health review of School District Plans to reconvene students, teachers and staff in close contact within Anchorage Schools while Anchorage is experiencing a pandemic.

Sara Dykstra shared and proposed an Amendment to the Resolution, adding an additional RESOLUTION clause:

- the Rogers Park Community Council strongly encourages the Municipality to work directly with ASD, employers, childcare providers and the community in a collaborative process to communicate prioritizing the return to in person learning for our students.

The Amendment was seconded by Linda Chase.

President Lindbeck asked the maker of the Motion whether the Amendment could be accepted as a friendly Amendment. With the permission of the Second, the Maker of the Motion accepted the Amendment as a Friendly Amendment.

A Roll Call Vote was taken:

Chat Box Tally was 22 in favor, one opposed.

Verbal Votes were one in favor, one opposed.

The Total Vote Tally was 23 in favor, 2 opposed. Motion Passed.

Member Comments:

Michael Savitt picked up on the theme of the Amendment to the Resolution of the need to convene a broad diverse multi-stakeholder group to advise the Assembly on public policy considerations during the pandemic. Dr. Savitt provided his e-mail in the chat box, mbsmd1@gmail.com, and asked those who may be interested to join him in drafting a resolution in support of the Assembly convening

Linda Chase concurred with the sentiment that the Assembly should consult with a broad range of stakeholders in its deliberations.

Ron Alleva took a few minutes to highlight his concerns that the pandemic was a real and serious disease and that we all needed to remind our neighbors of the importance of masking when out in public – holding up a “mask it or casket” sign to his camera. Mr. Alleva then brought forward to his camera a plastic bag with a dead rat and mouse and offered that rats and mice were widespread in our community, and perhaps aided by food sources in restaurants that had been closed by the pandemic, could further exacerbate the risk of diseases spreading across the community.

Without objection Steve Lindbeck adjourned the meeting at 9:18pm.