

Eagle River Valley Community Council Meeting
Wednesday, October 13, 2021 6:30pm
REGULAR MEETING
Zoom Virtual Meeting
MEETING MINUTES – Approved November 11, 2021

Call to order at 6:36pm by Julie Jessen.

Quorum was established.

Federation webpage: [Federation of Community Councils](#)

Introductions and Announcements: none

Meeting Minutes Approval: Draft meeting minutes from May 12, 2021 and September 8, 2021 meetings were reviewed. Motion to approve by Tom Freeman; seconded by Scott Bailey. Approved by a vote of 13 yea, 0 nay, 0 abstain.

New Business:

HALO

Katie Nolan

Hillside District plan vs. Anchorage Assembly actions

Ms. Nolan provided the following information about HALO and actions by the Anchorage Assembly:

- HALO is a non-government agency that was established over 54 years ago.
- The Anchorage Hillside area has a district plan. This plan shows that some areas of the Hillside must remain low density.
- A developer wanted to build at a higher density rate on specified properties than the plan allows.
- The Assembly did not follow Title 21 and approved gutting the Hillside district plan. The justification was that there is a housing crunch and homelessness issue, so the housing density was changed.
- This could happen to Chugiak/Eagle River as well. Chugiak/Eagle River last updated our plan in 2006. Assembly could choose to override our plan as well.
- A Resolution was submitted to the Assembly by the Hillside Council, objecting to changes to the Hillside district plan.
- Suggestion was made to submit a Resolution in support of the C/ER Plan to the Assembly. Ms. Nolan will provide a draft resolution.

Ms. Crystal Kennedy, ER Assembly member, provided this additional information:

- The developer was asked to re-work their plans.
- Planning & Zoning recommended changing the district plan, which resulted in housing density being changed.
- It is a challenging and time-consuming process to change the district plan.
- We could have some higher density areas in Eagle River, but the community should have input on it.
- The draft resolution will be modified for our council by ERVCC Secretary for consideration at the November meeting.

Application for Marijuana Establishment License

Alice's at 12111 Horseshoe Drive, Eagle River

- Alice's application to open an Eagle River location is 28th in the queue for the Alcohol & Marijuana Control Board consideration.

Ms. Crystal Kennedy, ER Assembly member, provided this additional information:

- Eagle River has a rule that there must be a 1000 ft buffer around schools, churches, and day care facilities, within which marijuana establishments cannot be placed.
- The application cannot be approved without a variance to the 1000 ft buffer rule. It is very unlikely the variance will be granted. Ms. Kennedy will check with Planning & Zoning to determine the likelihood the variance will be granted.

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Questions from attendees included:

- Did we have a resolution regarding marijuana establishments drafted previously that could be modified for Alice's and submitted to the Assembly?
- Chugiak/Eagle River Advisory Board issued a resolution previously on this topic.
- Since Alice's would not be located in our community council, we will not receive notifications from the Control Board about this application. Is it possible for individuals to be notified of progress by the Control Board?

Eagle River Valley Community Council Elections

Open positions on our Council board include:

- Vice-President
- Education
- Platting (re-elect incumbent Pete Panarese)
- Federation of Community Councils Alternate

Pete Panarese agreed to remain on the Platting Board. Motion by Tom Freeman for Mr. Panarese to continue as our representative on the Platting Board, seconded by Ruth Armstrong. Approved by a vote of 13 yea, 0 nay, 0 abstain.

Representative Kelly Merrick

Alaska House of Representatives

Representative Merrick provided the following update:

- House Ways & Means Committee continues working.
- Expectations are low for a productive special session.
- Upcoming meetings include:
 - House State Affairs will meet tomorrow at 1:00 PM at the Anchorage LIO.
 - House Ways and Means will meet tomorrow at 10:00 AM at the Anchorage LIO.
 - State Affairs will be held at the Capitol building in Juneau but will be streamed on akl.tv

Additional topics:

Eaglexit - Sean Murphy

907-632-5307, sean.eaglexit@gmail.com

Mr. Murphy provided the following update:

- Eaglexit is an effort to detach Assembly District 2 from the municipality of Anchorage.
- This effort is continuing with focus on educating the public about this initiative.

Brush piles from early snowstorm:

There are many broken trees and brush piles after the recent early snowstorms. Can these be removed before additional snowfall? Suggestion to connect with Ms. Crystal Kennedy or Ms. Jamie Allard to see if ER Street Maintenance can send crew out to do chipping.

Recycling at the Anchorage Landfill:

There was recently an issue that recycling bins were not available.

Old Business:

Crystal Kennedy or Jamie Allard - Anchorage Assembly

Crystal.Kennedy@anchorageak.gov, 907-351-1430

Ms. Kennedy provided the following update:

- The Assembly approved a mask mandate for the municipality. The mayor vetoed it and the Assembly Chair scheduled a meeting to override the veto.

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- The budget will be introduced later in October. The mayor would like to save 5-8% on the budget. We are getting closer to meeting this goal.
- We will be getting 4 officers in Eagle River soon. (vs. 3 we have had)
- Additional COVID testing funding was approved by the Assembly. Ms. Kennedy voted against this due to change in the source of the funding.
- Current budget situation is we are \$50M to \$80M in debt. The previous 'true up' showed we were \$25M behind in revenue. We've spent \$110M of which only \$39M is confirmed to be reimbursed by FEMA.
- FEMA has reimbursed \$26M and we are still waiting for earthquake repair funds.
- Fire Department reported many Eagle River residents have a 4-minute response time. However, on Hiland and out Eagle River Valley, response time can be as long as 15 minutes.
- The police department has been working on the body camera policy. Look at the AnchoragePolice.com website and provide feedback on the plan. Public comment is accepted through November 6.
- There are many municipal boards that lack a representative from Eagle River/Chugiak. Consider volunteering for a position. See muni website for additional information

Questions posed to Ms. Kennedy included:

- What was \$50,000 approved by Assembly for legal counsel? The Assembly wanted clarification on the separation of powers between the legislative and executive branches. There are many gray areas. However, the attorney chosen by the Assembly has potential conflicts of interest.

Eagle River Community Patrol – Cliff Cook – No Report

Committee Reports:

CBERRRSA (Road Board): James McCurtain/ Arlene Rasic

James.mccurtain@hotmail.com, 907-301-4042

Mr. McCurtain provided the following update:

- Capital improvements plan was completed for 2022. Road board will hear about it in November.
- Eagle River Lane detour should be done soon. Paving is complete. Striping remains to be done.
- A traffic study was requested near Eagle River High School. Should hear results at late October meeting.
- DOT Bridge backup. Asked municipality to provide an update on congestion areas in Eagle River and on grant dollars allocated for Artillery Road interchange study.
- There was a speed mitigation request for Eagle River Lane. We haven't received a response from the municipality.
- Next road board meeting is October 25, 6:30pm near Library (last Monday of the month). Municipality gives update first, followed by Eagle River Board meeting.

Questions from the attendees included:

- Trying to figure out how/who can fix road barriers along the roads. Mr. McCurtain will check with Mark at Eagle River Streets Maintenance.
- We need a good bike path into downtown area. Have been trying for years to have it improved. The bike path along ER Loop is DOT's so they are responsible for improvements. What is process to get on municipality's CIP (Capital Improvement Plan) or on State's STIP list? CIP ideas are submitted in spring to Mr. McCurtain. This list will be reviewed next month. See link on CBERRRSA website. AMATS for DOT and municipality may be better avenues to pursue for bike path. Be specific on why improvements are needed. Representative Merrick will follow up on bike path request to the state.

Chugiak/Eagle River Consortium Advisory Board – Julie Jessen – No report.

School Board Report - Pat Higgins, Anchorage School Board

Mr. Higgins provided the following update:

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- He has been talking to principals and teachers. The academic results are not good.
- A new math program is being implemented.
- The school district has some serious staffing issues. They are short on substitute teachers, school bus drivers and food services staff.
- We are halfway through the quarter. There have been some positive COVID cases at the school but there haven't been any shutdowns.

Questions posed to Mr. Higgins included:

- Why are there such shortages of workers? People are being encouraged to change jobs with sign-on bonuses. People who are vulnerable (COVID) are taking earlier retirements. People are staying out of the work force. It's very difficult to get applicants. We have small substitute teacher pool. We lack enough back-up bus drivers. And COVID rates are still very high.
- What was the student population in district 2? Unsure-Mr. Higgins wasn't on school board at the time.
- ASD currently has 43-44K students. It was predicted to be less than 45,000.
- Were school bus drivers paid when school was closed last year? Unsure- Mr. Higgins wasn't on school board at the time but will check into this.
- Even with lower student count, it is difficult to get enough teachers.
- We continue to pay taxes and need to ensure the schools remain open.

Education: Open position/No report.

Federation of Community Councils – Tom Freeman

- Next meeting is next week.

Parks and Rec: Pete Panarese

Mr. Panarese provided the following update:

- Eagle River Nature Center had a very successful event on September 18.
- Chugiak/Eagle River state parks – trailheads are full.
- There was a public meeting on the Peters Creek dog park proposal. People provided concerns. Parks & Rec is making adjustments to address the concerns including traffic study plans.
- Mirror Lake trails – many have been completed for biking and skiing.
- Bear Paw Festival was very successful.
- The final report on the budget audit conducted by the municipality should be coming out soon, including putting procedures in place to improve.
- Parks & Rec board is getting more involved with the budget for parks management. There are 42 projects underway. Looking at projects' status and associated budget. Looking at how much of budget is committed and how to improve services provided.

Questions for Mr. Panarese included:

- There are a lot of damaged trees from the early snow. Is there a plan to travel the trails and clear for safe passage? This is ongoing work. Mr. Panarese will check into this.
- Will e-bikes be able to be used on the trails? Mr. Panarese will check into this.
- Chinook games at Loretta French Park. Is there a plan to fix the grade along the path and the sound issues on the home team side? Parks & Rec is responsible for this.
- Suggestion was made that residents send a list of possible projects to the board for consideration.
- The Arctic Wild Games are coming back and will be held in Matsu.
- Any progress on the exchange of land for Lions Park? Mr. Panarese will check into this.

Platting: Pete Panarese – nothing to report

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Meeting adjourned at 8:29pm.

Next meeting is on November 10, 6:30pm via Zoom.

ERVCC Board Members (Term Expiration) President: Julie Jessen (2022); Vice President: open; Treasurer: Ruth Armstrong (2022); Education: open; Parks & Rec: Pete Panarese/Ruth Armstrong - Alt (2023); C/ER Advisory Board: Julie Jessen (2022); Platting: Pete Panarese (2022); Federation of Community Councils (FCC): Tom Freeman (2023)/Alt: open; Road Board: James McCurtain(2022)/Arlene Rasic – Alt (2022); Secretary: Joy Webb (2022)