

Resolution 2022-10

Northeast Community Council (NECC)

July 14, 2022

Timely Notifications To Community Councils (CC's) and Opposition to the Unnoticed and Ill-Advised Emergency Repurposing of Centennial Park

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Municipal Charter Art, VIII, Sec 8.01 establishes Community Councils as representatives for neighborhoods in planning and development; **and**

WHEREAS, Community Councils are intended to reflect actual neighborhoods and serve as an advisory function to the Assembly and the local government process, including management of lands within their boundaries; **and**

WHEREAS, Community Councils review processes related to zoning in Title 21, alcohol licenses, and marijuana licenses, in addition to councils' functions in commenting on capital improvement projects, draft ordinances, and other city business; **and**

WHEREAS, communication with the residents of the municipality should be a priority for the MOA "to afford citizens an opportunity for maximum community involvement and self-determination," as is their stated purpose in the MOA charter; **and**

WHEREAS, Transparent and timely communication is necessary for effective emergency response; **and**

WHEREAS, Centennial Park is an important recreational facility located within the boundaries of the NECC, and the MOA failed to notify the community council about the emergency repurposing of the park; **and**

WHEREAS, the MOA indiscriminately bused hundreds of homeless individuals, including small children, disabled, and highly vulnerable adults to Centennial Park, which is not close to public or commercial services, without proper basic resources, including bedding, tents, food, food storage, social workers, and trauma-informed personnel, creating an unsafe environment for the individuals in the park, the surrounding community, and the local wildlife; **and**

WHEREAS, the neighbors of the park have noted an increase in random people trespassing on private property outside of the park, causing fear of entering the park by traditional park users, **and**

WHEREAS, north Muldoon businesses, especially the restaurants, have lost business from the traditional paying customers that use Centennial Park campground as a result of the repurposing of the park, causing a loss of income to said businesses and negatively impacting the perception of the campground as a safe and pleasant place, a popular gateway to Anchorage for RVers and camping travelers, **and**

WHEREAS, the willingness of individuals, businesses, and nonprofit and faith-based organizations to step up in the absence of a clear plan or municipal leadership isn't a justification for the abdication of municipal responsibility nor ignoring the long-standing notification practices we expect.

NOW THEREFORE THE NECC LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the residents, through their NECC, respectfully request that the Mayor's Office honor established public notice requirements between the Municipality of Anchorage and Community Councils, including the Federal of Community Councils **and**

evaluate the public notice requirements during emergencies of each of the MOA departments so that information is disseminated to residents in a manner consistent with the urgency of an emergency declaration and in alignment with each Council's Bylaws for notice to its community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that members of the community (consisting at least of Assembly members representative of the area, but preferably including community council) be invited to participate in decisions regarding emergency processes that impact the community **and**

during emergency conditions, members from the Mayor's office and affected municipal departments attend community council meetings.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NECC is strongly opposed to the continued emergency repurposing of Centennial Park, which is becoming a humanitarian crisis, and encourages the Mayor's office to immediately begin relocating unhoused individuals, starting with the most vulnerable, to appropriate alternative housing/ sheltering **and**

begin a thorough expert-led community-based process to build a comprehensive municipality-wide homelessness strategy that equitably distributes the collective responsibilities and adequately addresses root causes without criminalizing or dehumanizing unhoused individuals and without trampling on the rights of residents and property owners, and business owners in any part of the Municipality of Anchorage.

Resolution Vote: For 25 Against: 0 Abstain: 0

George Martinez

George Martinez President, NECC

Ronald P. Meehan

Ronald P. Meehan, Secretary, NECC

7/19/22

Mayor Bronson and Assemblypersons,

Scenic Foothills stands in solidarity with Northeast Community Council and their July 14th Resolution regarding timely notifications to community Councils and opposition to the unnoticed and unsupported repurposing of a public park for a homeless response.

Community councils are the cornerstones of our city and act as a voice for the neighbors in our unique areas. Traditionally liquor licenses, new business and changes in zoning are announced at community council meeting for information and input. This is an important step in transparency and democracy. We understand that this process was not followed in the repurposing of the Centennial campground. We understand that the homeless response is a challenge, but notifying the community of this plan was an important step in helping with the response.

Since Centennial campground has already been repurposed as a homeless encampment, we ask that the municipality provide a coordinated response to include: meals, on site medical services, housing outreach, adequate shelter (including gathering area for warming) and a safe environment with lockers for valuables, security and bear-proof storage. Many of our community members have donated items and volunteered time and have seen that families with children, vulnerable and mobility challenged individuals are part of the population. They should immediately be transferred to more appropriate shelters or housing. In the eyes of those with boots on the ground, this is a humanitarian crisis!

We do not support a change to the city ordinance allowing open-ended, at-will extensions of stay limits at parks. Furthermore, proper notification of changes to city ordinances must be given to the community councils that may be directly affected by them and given opportunity for adequate community dialogue. If emergency stay extensions are necessary for Centennial Park, while this situation is resolved, these should be considered on a time certain basis only and with proper notice to area community councils.

With ground not even broken for the Elmore transitional shelter, we are reaching a crisis. We understand that the funds for this are attached to using the Golden Lion hotel. It is time to consent and get to work.

Respectfully,


Karen Berger, President
Scenic Foothills Community Council Executive Board.