

RUSSIAN JACK COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

6:30 PM, Wednesday, January 11, 2023

At Zion Lutheran Church – 2100 Boniface Parkway

Present: Ed Leach, Lori Pickett, Kathleen Plunkett, Lindsay Hajduk, Dan & Sherry Wright

Present via ZOOM: Kari McKitrick, Lisa McGuire, Keelin Baughman, Ted Eischeid, Nathaniel Gingery,

Meeting was called to order at 6:31 pm by Vice President Lori Pickett.

1. Welcome and Land Acknowledgement We are meeting on Dena'ina Land – grateful for their care and sharing the land with us.

2. Legislative report (3 minutes each)

Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson (Maya provided an update similar to submitted her December report electronically (attached).

Sen. Bill Wielechowski (Mercedes Colbert) – Transitioning in Juneau going on. Rules Chair – approve staff hiring, office space. Bills passing out of final committee get scheduled for the floor by the Rules Committee. Welcome anyone that wants to visit Juneau from Russian Jack area. 4 things focus – education (increase base student), recruitment/retirement – no defined benefit for employees, energy costs, lowering health care costs. Please get your priority lists in asap. Lori will be there Friday.

Sen. Forrest Dunbar – no report

Sen Tom Begich – Mercedes said Tom sends his farewells and Mercedes is working with Sen Wielechowski.

Rep. Genevieve Mina – (Katy Giorgio provided an update) looking forward to organizing. Office is getting up and running this week – welcome to contact them.

Rep. Stanley Wright – no report

Rep. Andy Josephson (Tristan Walsh) – no report.

Rep. Andrew Gray (Maya provided an update similar to Katy's.)

3. Assembly report (3 minutes each)

Pete Petersen – had a long meeting last night. Body cam with APD is an ongoing issue. Decisions on who to purchase cameras from will be made this Spring. Arbitration with APD union is ongoing. Up to 360 people at the Sullivan Arena with room for another 100+ in a warming area. Snow removal calls are still coming in. They are working on it, with many working 20 consecutive days. Contracting with private companies to haul snow. Accessory dwelling unit ordinance is an issue they have been working on for 6 months. They worked through 13 amendments and passed last night. There is a demand for housing in Anchorage, so

they are trying to do whatever possible to accommodate more housing. Amy Dembowski hired an attorney claiming unlawful termination.

Ted Eidscheid trying to remember when the police cam issue began – roughly two years ago. Concerned about the slow rollout, understanding the arbitration. It was a voter initiative.

Kathleen – DeBarr is still only 1.5 lanes. State vs Muni is part of the problem, but Muni is the one contracted with removing the snow. Farmer Place is also a concern with what was 1.5 lane turned into a one lane road by the snow plows with promise to remove but no follow up.

Lisa asked what the problem on snow removal is. Contract negotiations, lack of a meaningful raise (state vs municipal) wages disparity resulted in many muni employees going to work for the state.

Joey Sweet – is the person that was appointed by the assembly to replace Forrest as of Friday, January 6. There was a total of 5 applicants. Lives just off Tudor Road. Served on UAA Board of Regents. Assembly also confirmed Chief Financial Officer as part of the consent agenda. (Grant Y.) with a worksession tomorrow. Golden Lion will be used for homeless / low income housing. There are a few things that need to be addressed prior to sheltering people there with about 4-6 months work needed. Joey's email is up and running.

4. School board report (3 minutes each) – Kelly Lessens provided an update from Anchorage School Board – happy that school is back in session. School Board road into driveway much clearer, thankful for that. Best wishes for 2nd Semester. Recap of December report. Need to make up 5 snow days with plans to eliminate parent/teacher conferences in February, eliminate development for teacher day, from January 30 to March 9 they will add on 30 minutes to each school day. District will be ready to pivot to remote learning if there are additional snow days. Town halls re: school closures due to declining school populations as well as budget deficits. Proforma budget to close \$40 million deficit included closing some schools, shift 6-8 for middle schools, increasing people/teacher ratio. Savings coming from unfilled positions and benefits. These end up being borne by current employees, picking up the slack. 2nd meeting in February will take up that budget. Last Monday work session included historical perspective on school start times – secondary do better when they start after 8:30 am. Proposals in 2018 on this issue and research done but nothing changed. Administration will need to make a new recommendation regarding school start time. Base student allocation of no less than \$860 per student is an adjustment needed for a level of funding to better meet student needs. Return to defined benefit for teachers to help with retention/recruitment. Transportation budget also needs to be adjusted to match current gas prices. January 23 is next board meeting. Some board policies to improve student outcomes – wellness 50/40 will help make additional time for recess and lunch district wide in elementary schools. ChatGPT tool will upend education – can summarize, generate a report. Academic honesty policy will eliminate students working with artificial intelligence to do their homework for them. “I Have a Dream” drama will be held at Bettye Davis East High on January 16 at 6:30 pm. Kelly will be in Juneau in February. No school closures will be final until the budget approval in February. Abbott Loop Elementary is one proposed for closure. The question of school consolidation will be with us for the foreseeable future.

Ted – had exposure to the ChatGPT and is concerned as a former teacher. Question about the middle school shift discussion. There is a middle school model that allows collaboration among the teachers that benefit students.

Kathleen – middle school model is better for the kids, but not cheaper. Question about transportation budget within the base student allocation (statewide) – is that just bussing or does that include airplane and ferries? Not sure, but it's a good question and Kelly will find out.

Ed – West High School grad – started at 8:20 am, done at 3:30 pm. Not sure when start time changed, but it worked well for them. Spoke about changing the start time for the School year – mid February – Mid November would be an idea to avoid the snow day issue. Nationwide school start times have become earlier, with multi-tiered bus transportation to accommodate delivering students.

Joey – expectation is ChatGPT will be turned into a search engine – plans to purchase from Apple by Microsoft.

5. FCC report – Kathleen Plunkett- no report as there was no December meeting.

6. Community Council Boundaries – Sherry Wright provided a report that Tom Davis with MOA is leading a review of the 10 year boundary project, requesting volunteers to serve on an advisory committee. He did not have specific meeting dates, but looking to see who might be interested. I also asked if we could get a map of the current community council boundaries all on one page, preferable 8.5 x 11. Still waiting to hear about specific dates and a map. Sherry Wright volunteered and Ed Leach will serve as back up (once we get dates).

This discussion led to a discussion of the district reapportionment and an overlay of assembly/legislative districts to help with that discussion.

7. Capital Projects update for RJCC area – The document was made available so that people could provide feedback. Forrest said many of the road projects will be handled via state or city governments. Ted has a rubric method that can help prioritize the list. Policy makers prefer knowing what is most important so perhaps the 1st or 2nd top priority issues can be resolved.

Russian Jack Springs Park and Community Gardens were two projects identified as priorities. The Garden needs a location in order to move forward meaningfully with it. It was determined that the road projects should remain on the list and a way to identify priorities.

Ted offered to facilitate us working through the list to prioritize the it (perhaps removing some, adding others). Executive Board will have a worksession via Zoom January 24 from 5 – 7 pm with a final approval scheduled for our regular February meeting. Meeting notice will be sent and public is welcome to attend.

8. Neighborhood/Community Announcements - Keelin Mt View Library update branches closed Saturday for Martin Luther King Day. PFD season – be sure to apply and library has forms or online assistance. Lori asked about Digital Literacy/Broadband funding offered by Rasmusson Foundation. The Mt View Library has been contacted.

AK Literacy Program is under construction for safety updates. Big thanks to Anchorage Assembly for grants and funding. Classes will be more accessible for those with mobility issues.

There was some discussion about moving our meeting either to the AK Literacy Project offices or back to Wonder Park Elementary. We would need to change the meeting date to a Tuesday or Thursday if we wanted to meet at AK Literacy Project office. Need to talk to Tammy about Wonder Park Elementary and use of internet there.

Next meeting is scheduled for February 8th at 6:30 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:
Sherry Wright, Secretary