

## RUSSIAN JACK COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

6:30 PM, Wednesday, April 12, 2023

At Zion Lutheran Church – 2100 Boniface Parkway

Present: Ed Leach, Kathi Jo & Bob Skaats, Doug Tollend, Kevin Pope, Nick Rone, Kathleen Plunkett, Lori Pickett, Dan & Sherry Wright, Pete Petersen, Daniel George

Present via ZOOM: Kendra Kloster, Keelin Baughman, Sen Bill Wielechowski, Randy Ribble, Katy Giorgio, Arina Filippenko; Lindsey Hajduk, Rep Genevieve Mina, Jim Nordlund, Margo Bellamy, Ari, Stanley Wright

Meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by President Kendra Kloster.

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

2. Anchorage Police Department Report A request for a report on safety in our parks, in particular in regard to the recent bodies found in Russian Jack Springs Park with very little information about what happened. Officer Rone is the officer for our area and reported that he has been working this area for awhile. 1000s of people safely utilize the parks in Anchorage. Many people live in our parks. Some of the camps are benign, others are where stolen property is found. People have asked what to do if they come across either stolen property or someone in distress. APD is here for the community and if you have a concern, let them know. For long term camps, go to APD web site “I want to...” And make a report of the homeless camp. This generates a response from the police community action team that will check on those camps and go a bit more in depth with people at the camps (including abatement). He spoke about the park cleanups that take place in the Spring.

Question – how many officers on any given shift (community wide)? 26 patrol units. That stretches from Knik River to Turnagain Arm.

Question about deaths in RJSP – Officer Rone didn't have any specific information. Many times people with substance abuse issues are found dead in the various Anchorage parks. Deaths are investigated to find out cause of death and whether it is a homicide or not. RJCC needs to provide dates of the incident if we want more specific information. If APD determines the public needs to know, they provide a press release. Lexus/Nexus provides information about criminal activity.

3. Legislative report (3 minutes each)

Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson (Keith Bauguess) – submitted her April report electronically (in April handouts).

Sen. Bill Wielechowski - Waiting for the budget. Concern of underfunding of about \$6 million with no way to cover the shortfall. Constitutional Budget Reserve cannot go below \$2 billion. Some of the current bills under consideration include a bill requiring schools to teach financial literacy; community solar for neighborhoods getting drafted. Town Hall meeting coming up April 15 11:30 – 1 at Chester Valley Elementary.

Question about park money eligible for federal grants? Will have to look into that. There was a mistake in the budget last year and some funds are available that need to be used before we lose them. He encouraged us to find space for the community garden, which is in the works.

Sen. Forrest Dunbar - priority increasing BSA, returning to defined benefits for public employees. SB 77 passed senate yesterday allowing for property tax exemptions on certain economic development properties and gives local governments the option to implement a tax on

blighted/deteriorated properties (unoccupied). Other bills: SB 103 Peer Support Counseling for police and 1<sup>st</sup> responders. SB 104 Increase funds for civil legal services fund. Increasing funding for Chugach State Park. Forrest can be reached at [sen.forrest.dunar@akleg.gov](mailto:sen.forrest.dunar@akleg.gov)

Rep. Genevieve Mina – House has operating budget and spent last week voting on amendments. Focused on education, BSA and defined benefits without draining the budget. Our coalition had a walk out regarding education funding in hopes of better communication. The new legislature is interested in coming up with new revenue. Three bills: HB 142 2 % sales tax without exemption; HB 153 increase oil & tax mill rate; HB 156 reinstates the state income tax 2% on Alaskans earning over \$200,000 and \$20 deducted from PFD from anyone earning under \$200,000. HB Resolution 4 honors Korean relationship. HB 23 honors Filipino community. HB 127 pays for family care giving. Medicaid redetermination of eligibility is going on (800-478-7778). Department of Labor reopened their Office of Citizenship and Resettlement for immigrant assistance. Genevieve can be reached at 907-465-3424 or [rep.genevieve.mina@akleg.gov](mailto:rep.genevieve.mina@akleg.gov)

Question about childcare reimbursement program requiring GED for in home childcare. Current bill focuses on family care giving, but glad to bring this to the attention of those working on childcare issues.

Rep. Stanley Wright - Working on the budget. HB 28 access to marijuana conviction records. HB 51 use of designated refrigerants. HB 57 emergency medical services peer review adding to medical provider definition. HB 137 physical therapy licensure compact. HB 138 Audio/Speech language compact in order to provide services in a timely manner. HB 145 payday loan bill - there was no cap on interest rates. Capped at 30% is the goal. Juneteenth Day bill. He's keeping busy. Let him know any concerns/needs you have.

Rep. Andrew Gray (Maya) – no report.

#### 4. Assembly report (3 minutes each)

Pete Petersen – Contract dispute between the MOA and Hickel Construction. Navigation Center on Tudor & Elmore is the area of the project. \$50,000 was allotted for design work. The contract increased to \$10 million, which has never happened before. Construction was taking place, but had not been approved by the Assembly, so the work was stopped. \$4.9 million of the work has been done with over \$2 million pending and trying to be sorted out. \$4.5 million approved for school bus replacement costs. Firehouse Subs grant for rapid response bicycles and accessories \$320,000. Property taxes due June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> due August 13. Change in the questions that are asked in the case of a Conflict of Interest. The chair determines, but the Assembly can override.

Question – Asked how did Hickel start work without a signed contract? That is not normal, but the thought if they did, they are out of luck. They have worked for the MOA on projects for over 20 years, so they know funding has to be approved.

Comment/Question – thanks for your service on the Assembly and with the young athletes of our community. Homelessness housing with the Navigation Center being partially built (which had wide support last year) and now stalled. The alternative use of another facility (Charter School) which will need renovation and cost roughly \$100,000 / month. Stop lights have been sought in this area for a school and denied. Concern that if a homeless shelter is a higher priority for a stop light than for a school – where are the priorities? Pete would be surprised if the city ends up putting a homeless center in the Charter School. Concern was expressed of the use of the fire

station in that area ending up dedicated to the needs of a homeless shelter, as it would be right next door to the new fire station in RJCC area.

Daniel moved that we honor Pete Peterson for his service to the community. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Kathleen Plunkett. Motion carried. A round of applause for Pete's dedicated service followed.

Joey Sweet – (Arina Filippenko staff provided the report) MOA confirmed the new attorney and youth representative. Sullivan Arena will be closing April 30. Ban use of facial recognition technology by the MOA. Resolution congratulating East High Basketball championship.

Daniel George – appreciates work on the facial recognition ban.

Christopher Constant – no report

5. School board report (3 minutes each) – Margo Bellamy provided an update. April 18 is next meeting at 6 pm. Public comment is available during the School Board meeting during the time the Board is taking action on a given item (Oral Public Testimony is 3 minutes – there is no limit on written testimony). Budget has been approved by Assembly. Appreciation for the community support on the school bond. K3 ELA curriculum adopted which aligns with reading proficiency goal. Moving 6<sup>th</sup> grade to Middle School is supported, but final decision has not been made. They anticipate robust discussions on school start times will continue. Land Acknowledgement with Eklutna Tribe will be up for a vote. Once Abbott Loop Elementary School is clear, Native School Charter will move in with a 5-year occupancy extended to them. SB 52 will be hearing tomorrow at 2 pm requesting a statutory increase in the BSA. Lottery school deadline is April 14. The School District has a defined process for questionable materials in the library. Welcome comments regarding employees also (on their website). Graduation season is just around the corner with summer learning starting in June (free). There may be a couple special programs that go into July.

6. FCC report – Daniel George - Mountain View meeting is now on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday so representatives aren't hopscoching meetings. FCC – topic was ballot propositions. FCC has only met via ZOOM since the pandemic, but will begin in person option with this coming meeting next week. Mayor's office has expressed concern of FCC staff alleged political activities with a loss of contract with FCC / MOA a possible consideration. FCC is an annual appropriation funded by the Assembly approval. With several past Council Presidents now serving on the Anchorage Assembly, this most likely would not transpire.

7. Traffic Calming Projects in RJCC area – Randy Ribble, Traffic Engineering provided a report. A legislative FY 2022 grant of \$500,000 providing for pedestrian safety upgrades in the Russian Jack Community Council area has been received by the MOA. The project scope identifies four primary projects including: street lighting along Hoyt Street between San Antonio and E 6<sup>th</sup> Ave – new lighting infrastructure must be underground with only a design study report funded; traffic calming around Williwaw Elementary School – speed humps/cushions, permanent radar speed signs, curb extensions potentially on San Antonio, San Ernesto and San Roberto; no grant funding is needed for Wonder Park Elementary School as existing pedestrian improvement to be constructed using bond funding on Lionheart Drive and Camelot Drive; , and Pine Street permanent radar signs (MOA added) for traffic calming as 85% speeding at 42 mph with the posted speed 30 mph.

Traffic Engineering is requesting input from the community council on prioritizing these projects. You can contact Randy at 907-343-8415 or [Randon.ribble@anchorageak.gov](mailto:Randon.ribble@anchorageak.gov)

Question – Fireoved off Caribou Street – there is one speed bump on the Boniface side of Caribou and another on the Davis side of Caribou. Why would they put speed bumps on two hills? He has lived in the neighborhood 42 years. A 4-way stop was installed on the hill. When it was redone about 5 years ago, they put the stops on Caribou and removed the stops on Fireoved. Excessive speeding as people came off Boniface is what he thinks is what they found in a study on that project. Randy will have to get back on the other issues as he has only been with Traffic a few years. They have tried to get speed bumps on Davis Street for 30 years. A 3-way stop at Caribou and Davis would help.

Sherry Wright made a motion to move forward with the Williwaw Elementary School project. 2<sup>nd</sup> from Daniel George. Motion carried.

8. Salvation Army – Clitheroe Booth Campus project – Lt Col Doug Tollerud, Divisional Commander provided a report about the facility on 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue which is under renovation to be used as a 3.1 level transitional housing program. This allows individuals working the program to become productive citizens by securing a job and permanent housing. Participants would continue to have access to counseling at the facility as they progress. Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority requested neighbors be notified of their intentions and provide any thoughts or concerns, if there are any. The facility is most likely in Airport Heights CC area, but near RJCC neighborhood.

He came seeking RJCC support. Salvation Army has been in Alaska for 125 years (since 1898). The Clitheroe Booth facility has capacity for 32. Clitheroe has a 63% success rate. That 37% typically are those who have no support system. Salvation Army will be applying for grants and upgrade landscaping on the property as they do renovations.

Question – location on Nichols and 20<sup>th</sup> which would be in Airport Heights community council. There is another facility with room for 65 men on 42<sup>nd</sup> Avenue currently being renovated, so the 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue may become a women’s treatment facility. Salvation Army came alongside those in Centennial Park this past summer. The goal is for people to be able to stand on their own two feet.

Ed Leach moves that RJCC supports the Clitheroe Booth project. Sherry Wright 2<sup>nd</sup>. Motion carried.

9. Neighborhood/Community Announcements - Tom Davis, Sr Planner with MOA Planning Department sent an email regarding the 10 year boundary project having identified two boundary study areas in the vicinity of RJCC. They are #6 and #15 in the 10-Year Review of Community Council Boundaries White Paper #2: Boundary Study Areas dated March 31, 2023. There will be a public comment period of at least 2 months once the Planning Department releases a public hearing draft report with recommendations, at which time they will request formal positions and resolutions from community councils.

Comment on boundary issue – we need to put this on our agenda for an upcoming meeting. We will invite Tom Davis to speak to this issue.

JBER is hosting an outreach to Anchorage recreational community on Monday, April 17 at 4:30 pm at the Wilda Marston Theatre in the Loussac Library with topics including safely accessing military lands for recreation, iSportsman permits and app, JBER connect app. Permits are required for everyone 16 years and older. <https://jber.isportsman.net>

Destination U-Med community workshop #2 will be held via Zoom on Wednesday, April 26 from 5:30 to 7 pm. Information at [www.destinationmedstudy.com](http://www.destinationmedstudy.com) Sherry Wright will not be able to attend and asked if there was anyone else from RJCC who may be available.

Keelin Baughman provided an update on Mountain View Library – Visit with a Crow April 25<sup>th</sup> at 4 pm; Visit with a Porcupine April 28<sup>th</sup> at 3 pm; Senior Poetry Workshop April 25<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm; Storytime every Tuesday at 6 pm.

Jim Nordlund – was Executive Director of Neighbor Works. Knows Kathleen and Lindsay are still active with that organization. There is another election coming up for Chugach Electric – Jim is running. April 19 through May 19 (ballots are electronic). Lack of natural gas in Cook Inlet threatens the ability to generate power and most of our homes are heated with natural gas as well. Advocating for getting renewables on the grid – solar and wind energy.

Jessica Parks – Anchorage Continuum of Care (she is a RJCC area resident) – knows many are concerned about homeless shelter closures coming up, which may lead to even more camps in our park.... Weekly digest is available with information about work being done on camps. April 27 meeting via zoom at 4 pm. Zoom meeting ID 870 7123 1355 <https://aceh.org/about-us/advisory-council> 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month meetings.

Lori Pickett - AK Literacy Project update re: broadband funding from Rasmusson Foundation. Her son has been assigned to Station 3 after graduating Firefighter's Academy.

Kendra Kloster – park clean up – we need to coordinate with Beth Nordlund and will put this on our May meeting agenda. We will probably need to have it later in May than usual because of all the snow.

Daniel George – agrees with pushing cleanup date back. Mayor Bronson recently appointed Daniel to the Planning & Zoning Commission. A round of applause followed.

Next meeting is scheduled for May 10th at 6:30 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:  
Sherry Wright, Secretary