

RUSSIAN JACK COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

6:30 PM, Wednesday, September 13, 2023

At Zion Lutheran Church – 2100 Boniface Parkway

Present: Ed Leach, Kathleen Plunkett, Kendra Kloster, Genevieve Kikukawa, John Sadler, Mercedes Colbert, Kathi Jo & Bob Skaats, Carol Krenselewski, Toni Merrill, Will Schneider, Forrest Dunbar, Andrew Gray, Bill Wielchowski, George Martinez, Genieve Mina, Dan & Sherry Wright

Present via ZOOM: Amy Facklam, Ted Eischeid, Ariell Wiggin, Carl Jacobs

Meeting was called to order at 6:34 pm by President Kendra Kloster.

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

2. Legislative report (3 minutes each)

Sen. Bill Wielechowski – Seat K - Setting up a road's tour to look at areas that need improvements. Let Bill know of any needs for road improvement. Williwaw Community Gardens received funding – public testimony tomorrow at 6 pm at Spenard Rec Center. 12 years ago we were not able to get water at Williwaw park, but they are working around that issue by digging a well. AMATS is working on a 2050 Master Plan which will direct where funds go for transportation projects. Comments on that are due October 9. Some of those items include; Glenn Highway to Scenic Foothills connecting trail; Pedestrian walkway on portions of Boniface. The full list will be available tomorrow. There was a long Trail event at Eklutna Lake yesterday – it's a piece meal project that has federal support now. This will be a boost for tourism and outdoor enthusiasts in Alaska. May be able to do more capital improvements (based on higher price of oil than the original budget.)

Sen. Forrest Dunbar – Seat J (see attached report). There was a newsletter sent out that highlights legislative efforts underway.

Rep. Genevieve Mina – Seat 19 - Protective bike lane on Pine Street – starts at Mountain View Drive and goes to DeBarr. The posts will be removed in the winter (federally funded pilot project). Transportation meeting on DRAFT Transportation Improvement (4 year program) – which did not provide much clarity in STIP on how projects are selected/approved, so there is an 180 day extension of the application. You can comment via the 2050 AMATS Master Plan.

Public comments on the new bike path – why is it on both sides? Buses and Anchor Rides are having trouble making the turn and this eliminated off-street parking for those who reside on Pine Street. There haven't been many people utilizing the bike lanes.

Response that they are trying to assess a balance between users.

Another comment was that Pine Street is one of the safest streets for bicyclists. There were projects on the previous STIP that are not on the new plans, that were supported. This is concerning as a public policy issue. One of the members has used the new bike lane and appreciates it.

SNAP information – broad-based eligibility to streamline the application process. Working with partner organizations around Alaska.

Rep. Stanley Wright – Seat 22 – no report

Rep. Andrew Gray - Seat 20 - Andrew will hold a Zoom gathering the second Thursday of the month (starting tomorrow) from 5:30 – 6:15 pm at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82440860621?>

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You can also email or call his Anchorage office. He also hosts a weekly podcast. (Lost the internet during Andrew’s presentation.)

3. Assembly report (3 minutes each)

Christopher Constant Seat 1B – no report

Daniel Volland Seat 1L – no report

Karen Bronga Seat 5H (report provided by Genevieve Kikukawa) – trying to connect the homeless campers in RJSP with services available. Water testing will be completed by the health department and more port-a-potties. She spoke about sheltering options that will cost 1.8 million dollars per month. Renaming Port of Anchorage “Don Young Port”. Public Comments on the homeless: Old Public Assistance building on 4th and Gambell has been vacant for several years. Anchorage has been short 3000 units in housing and there is a need for working individuals housing needs as well.

George Martinez Seat 5I – He and Karen are taking turns meeting with community councils. Housing worksession Friday – ideas moving toward different zoning, density, development issues. Housing summit will be held in November. Community & Economic Development looking at abandoned properties – have a registry in place which hopes to turn negative impact properties into a positive redevelopment. Anchorage Community Land Trust comes with matching dollars that may be able to help with affordable housing. Cold weather response - \$4 million has been allotted. Authorized Central Transfer station is a potential property for emergency shelter. Amy Demboski lawsuit has been filed against MOA – more to come on that. Public comments on Glacier & 20th RV campers, feeling unsafe at Muldoon Park. APD is not responding to calls from Eklutna tribe, saying it is not part of their service area. Visitors this summer were greeted by our beautiful park with garbage strewn in and around the campsites of those the city has allowed to set up tents. This is turning our park into a dump and if the city chooses to keep kicking the can down the road on developing some housing options for the homeless, they also need to provide a clean up crew. Parks & Rec employees did not take those jobs to become janitors for the homeless. Several people mentioned they pick up garbage when they see it. Funds have been appropriated and there is an expectation that the administration will use those funds.

Amy Facklam thanks Assembly members for funding to the Literacy Program.

4. School board report (3 minutes each) – Margo Bellamy provided an electronic report which will be attached. Carl Jacobs provided an update via Zoom. Focus is on academic outcomes and release of the testing scores. There has been some quality of life (lunch overhaul) issues addressed which include better staffing for cafeteria, full bus drivers this year and a hotline for

reporting bullying or intimidation (24 hour/7 days per week). Question on Governor's veto of funding? Too soon to know what/how the veto will affect.

5. FCC report – Kathleen Plunkett – no report as there has been no meeting since May. Hopefully will meet next Wednesday.

6. Discussion and Update on Parks – Trail improvements were made in one section of RJSP, but the bridge did not get replaced that was supported and supposed to be done last summer. Russian Jack trail construction update:
<https://www.muni.org/Departments/parks/Pages/RussianJackTrailImprovements.aspx>

Parks & Rec Commission will review Williwaw Community Garden for approval at their September 14 meeting at Spenard Rec Center. Space for about 32 wood framed garden plots with well drilling this fall and possibly fencing. Preparing the beds would begin Spring 2024.

7. Update on homeless shelter options -Assembly vote September 12 on emergency shelter for a funding proposal. Yarrow Griffith (via email to Sherry Wright) said the navigation center was voted down and is off the table.

8. Community Council Boundary Areas – Planning Department plans to release its staff report and recommendations the end of September for public review, for a two month-period. A hearing is tentatively scheduled for December 4 and any resolutions from community councils will need to be received by November to be considered. (Sherry will type up a DRAFT resolution to keep RJCC area as is for vote at our October meeting.

9. Capital Improvement Projects for RJCC area – List is the same as last year – we will look over and update with deletions / additions at our meeting next month.

10. Neighborhood/Community Announcements - No funding for bike paths on Pine Street! Dinosaur parks in East Anchorage for CIP (mammoths would be good). AK Literacy Program - has over 500 students (40% increase) and is hosting an open house September 20 from 10 am – 11 am. Forrest asked about child care providers issue among the immigrants. He is eager to remove barriers and needs more information on that issue. Ted – Arctic Cycle bike race was last week. Repaving has been done. Bonny Sosa Tuesday night runs started yesterday at 6:30 pm and are a great way to get out and enjoy our parks.

Next meeting is scheduled for October 11th at 6:30 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:
Sherry Wright, Secretary