

Minutes

Northeast Community Council (NECC)

September 21, 2023, | 7pm

Centennial Village- Multipurpose Room

9131 Centennial Circle, Anchorage, AK 99504

*NECC minutes are always taken by a volunteer board member

Board Members Present

Ron Meehan, President | **Murray Crookes**, Vice President | **Lyn Franks**, Treasurer | **Selina Metoyer**, Member | **Stu Grenier**, Member | **Bob Reupke**, FCC Delegate

Ron Meehan Calls Meeting to Order at 7:03PM

53 people were present virtually or in the room.

Pledge of Allegiance- Bob Reupke

Board Roll Call

Ron Meehan: We are eager and pleased to welcome Pamela Raygor to our Board. She isn't here tonight but I will give her an opportunity to introduce herself to everyone at our next meeting.

Minutes Approval: June - We are currently in a transitional period with our Secretary position, minutes will be ready next month.

Treasurer's Update - Lyn Franks reports \$1,827.57 in the bank account.

Fire Department: We received a five year \$4 million grant to beef up our wildlife management system. It was closed in 2008 due to budget cuts and we are just now able to open it up again. You can reach us with questions at 907-267-5006.

FCC Report

Bob Reupke: AMATS safety open house event on Tuesday October 3rd and Wednesday October 4th. We had two presentations, one from Chris Constant who said they have two hotels ready for the homeless but that seems to change every week. We have these great resources on Community Council 101. Public meeting on Tuesday to testify on changing the zoning to five districts.

Community Concerns and Activities (opportunity for community members to share concerns, requests for the council, and upcoming needs/activities, 2 min each).

Laura Moy: I want to get two speed humps on Twining Drive, I think people probably cut over from DeBarr to avoid going down Boniface when there are red lights and people just zoom through there.

Carolyn Ross: I would like to see the road repaired and replaced on E 5th Avenue. It has holes, dips, and the sides are wearing off. I would also like to see sidewalks on this side of town. You take your life into your hands when you try to go anywhere, even the corner store. I'm concerned for the safety of children walking from Muldoon down Duben to the Elementary school. They're having to walk on the side of the road, they're out in the road, to get to school. There's no sidewalks on the side of the street to keep children from playing in the street.

Ron Meehan: We should be in touch. We want to absolutely make sure to capture both repairing E 5th Avenue and needing more sidewalks in our Capital Improvement Projects priorities.

Ethan Pettigrew: I had two concerns. I think traffic calming is a good thing to do but I think you're missing the Perry and Twining intersection. I know at night people come screaming through there at 40 miles an hour at times, they don't pay attention to stop signs. People will patch through there to avoid Boniface. Second thing is APD's active shooter, however they announce to public schools, that's great, but I'm the Executive Director for Cook Inlet Native Head Start which is a 501c3. We serve 3-5 year olds, we're located

at the Muldoon-Tudor corner as well as over on 16th. We serve 265 children. A few years ago before the pandemic there was an active shooter on the East side, APD had streets shut down, there were cops everywhere but we had no clue what was going on. I called APD to ask and they said they couldn't give me any information since we weren't a public school. We went into lockdown when we found out there was an active shooter. I find it ridiculous that early learning centers whether they're a head start or whatever cannot be put on an active shooter alert. I think that's a travesty and we're looking at a dangerous situation in this city especially at this day and age when it is so common for these things to happen.

Stu Grenier: I can't use the restroom in Fred Meyer anymore without a passcode because homeless people are moving in there and causing problems. I was walking into Fred Meyer in Muldoon and a guy walked out with five nice pieces of steak under his coat. The alarm went off and a woman working there told him to stop and he just started walking faster.

Miles Brodsley: We want to thank the Community Council for all the great work you guys have done. We know this is years in the making of the Chanshtnu Muldoon Park, we've seen improvements there and it has made the community really nice and I second all the sidewalk comments, as a biker my wife and I bike to work everyday, we use the bus system, and we would love to see more pedestrian friendly streets. On Boston Street I saw a very close call with one of the kids on that street and a car. Cars come racing down it, there's no signage, and because of the way the road is designed they can just accelerate all the way down the street. With the park there, the library, and a new child daycare place going in on the corner, it's just an accident waiting to happen. I am hoping it can be prioritized for speed bumps, radar, or something. It's just a matter of time before something bad happens on that street without.

Selina Metoyer: This Saturday and September 30 are the last two days of the Muldoon Farmers Market. We have a mural we are doing at Chanshtnu Muldoon Park. Since the mural has been going up there hasn't been any more vandalism. I live on the corner of Oklahoma and 6th, I'm a block from Creekside Park Elementary. 6th Avenue dead ends at my block and people race down past the school, this happens every night and every day.

Courtney Eppler: I have a four year old and a one year old and they love to be out in the front yard. I wanted to also voice my concern along with my two neighbors about the need for traffic calming at Perry and Twining. I cannot be more than two feet away from my children because of how bad the cars speed few.

Legislative Reports (limit 3 min. each, including questions)

Rep. Wright: I'll talk about some of the legislation I've been working on. HB28- concealment of low level marijuana conviction records, HB51- refrigerants and firefighting substances, HB57- emergency medical services viewing and patient records, HB126- associate and professional licenses, HB137- physical therapist interstate compact, HB138- speech pathologist interstate compact, HB145 predatory lending and consumer protection- a lot of folks have been wanting me to work on something like that when I knocked on doors. HB157- establishing Juneteenth and HB161- supporting civil legal services, HB 159- safeguarding free speech in the workplace. I'm here to get your input and here what you want.

CONTACT: Phone: 907-269-0240, Email: Representative.Stanley.Wright@akleg.gov

Rep. Groh: I agree that the quality of the sidewalks and roads are a travesty here, I continue to work on that. Relationship between homelessness and low quality housing stock. This part of town has a high percentage of the visibly homeless and also low quality housing. I met with the top executives at the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation and that is something we are working on. Another thing impacting folks is the high cost and difficulty in getting healthcare, Alaska has the most expensive healthcare in the nation. Every Saturday from 12-2, I'm at the Lucky Wishbone to meet with constituents.

CONTACT: Phone: 907-952-3353, Email: Representative.Cliff.Groh@akleg.gov

Sen. Wielechowski: Rep. Mears is flying out of state to visit her son at college but asked for me to give her a quick report. She's working on the food security task force which she's implementing recommendations from, she is the Co-Chair of the Anchorage delegation which we will have in October with the Village of Eklutna, the Mayor, the School Board. She has met with the Principals of Bartlett, Begich, and Chester Valley to talk about the concerns they have and will have coffee chat at Cafecito Bonito on Saturday, October 7th at 9:30AM. As far as I go, there is a bill in the State Senate to address firefighter's pensions, I'm the co-sponsor of that bill. Alaska is the only state in the nation that does not have a defined benefits package for its employees and also doesn't have social security. If you work for 25 years as a firefighter or nurse you have no pension whatsoever. We are saying public employees leave in droves because of that. The Department of Revenue announced today that the PFD would be \$1,312 they will start hitting bank

accounts on October 5th. My staff David Dunsmore has been in the back taking notes on maintenance and road repairs people want. I had a tour of the Food Bank of Alaska with Ron, thank you Ron, they are in desperate need of donations either food or your time, if you have time to have the opportunity to help. Of course you can always donate money, there is a huge increase in the number of people seeking food assistance. We have a \$45,000 grant for East Anchorage parks, we're pushing for it to go to Nunaka Valley, that work will be done in 2023-2025.

CONTACT: Phone: 907-269-0120, Email: Senator.Bill.Wielechowski@akleg.gov

Assembly Reports (limit 3 min. each, including questions)

George Martinez: I first just want to shout out the work of Community Councils. I'm the Co-Chair of the Community and Economic Development Committee and one of the things that we started focusing on was vacant and abandoned properties. Turning them, reactivating them into housing, different classifications of housing not just necessarily permanent supportive housing. There are several hundred units of housing around the city. East Anchorage has a high number of vacant and abandoned properties, these are often nuisance properties. We are also passing a resolution providing more tools for municipalities to leverage and incentivize redeveloping blighted properties. Housing is the solution to the housing and homelessness crisis. We appropriated more money for snow removal, I made sure that in that language was money to clear sidewalks and bus stops. Implementation is very different, to be clear. We are currently down staff, machinery is where it should be but we are down staff. The Muldoon Park mural- I want to be clear that when the community has the opportunity to come together we can send the signal that we haven't lost hope which often invites other positives. In the face of vandalism we created a community mural.

Ron Meehan: I just want to add that the mural is an amazing opportunity to bring the community together to create something that all of us can be proud of.

Community Leadership Updates as available (3 min each) JBER, Mayor's Office, Police Department, Fire Department, Parks & Recreation, Muldoon Public Library, School Board, Community Patrol, others.

Joy Boston, JBER: If you are a recreator and like to go into the training areas, you may be familiar with I-Sportsman. It has not been replaced by Rec-Access, if you have an active I-Sportsman account you were automatically transferred and that permit is good until the end of the year. The air force recruiting service offers a three year opportunity in the summer for high school students age 16-18, it now has seven locations around the country for folks interested in aviation. It is a fully free program and there is no commitment to joining the military.

Jim Curran, Muldoon Public Library: We've gone through some major staffing changes at APL in the last six months. Elizabeth Nickolai is now assistant director for the system; our long term Eagle River librarian, Nancy Clark, has left for our collection manager position. After the post-pandemic of dropping down almost 2/3 of our leadership team we're now going to be back to full staff. We've had a few security changes with growing pains. We've kept our security guard and he does a fantastic job meeting and greeting people. I don't have anything to report on the budget, we continue our communications with the administration. Muldoon Library will be closed for Indigenous People's Day.

Carl Jacobs, School Board: ASD has received a prestigious blue ribbon award which recognizes excellent teaching nationally- Fair Valley Elementary from ASD was selected this year and I wanted to congratulate them as well as shout out all our amazing educators. The School Board remains focused on K-3 reading as our primary goal on improving student outcomes as data tells us will yield a cascade of positive outcomes after we improve those testing scores. The Board is always focused on ensuring graduates are prepared for college and life. We welcome anyone at any time to sign up to testify either in person or digitally so please go to asdk12.org to sign up to speak to the Board at our next meeting.

Bryan Wentz, Muldoon Elementary PTA: There are only four of us on the Muldoon Elementary PTA right now- we are having a membership drive that is leading into our October meeting. Our goal is parental involvement- how can we get parents more involved in the school so teachers can focus more on teaching the children. We go around with trash bags and pick things up, the food drive is something we do. You don't have to be a parent or involved in the school in any way to help out even if you just want to volunteer at the school. You can reach me at president.muldoonpta@gmail.com or text me at 907-205-7217.

Committee Updates (limit 2 min. each)

Ron Meehan: My goal is to have a meeting of the Capital Improvement Projects Committee by the end of the year. I know there is a huge amount of enthusiasm to evaluate that list, identify what our priorities are as a council- we've had a lot of conversation already tonight about getting more sidewalks, improving roadways, and various intersection projects. This is a great opportunity when we have that meeting to talk about what we want to see on that list and then how we want to prioritize them.

Sen. Wielechowski: When you're putting that list together, put them into small, medium, and large categories. The problem is that the municipality often has multimillion dollar projects and sometimes we have \$100,000, \$200,000, \$500,000 amounts available.

Lyn Franks, CIP: There is something on Duben that's starting to be put into the works with sidewalks and potentially a traffic light. It's being talked about for the first time since 2018. We will be working more on the CIP list and making things priorities according to the cost estimates.

Ron Meehan: And just to make it clear, when we have that meeting we will put it out to all of you. We want to see as many people there as possible. We also want to make sure that it is an ongoing conversation so people will still be able to contribute even if they aren't able to make that meeting.

Stu Grenier, Parks and Trails: Chugach Electric is just east of Centennial Park and the power lines have overgrown. I talked to them and they are very responsive, I walked around out there with their head alder cutter guy.

Ron Meehan: We do not currently have a Chair for the Placemaking Committee. You do not have to be a Board Member for the Northeast Community Council to serve as chair of that community. If you are interested in community beautification projects, getting more involved. Selina, George, and myself have all given a shout out to the great mural project underway in Chanshtnu Muldoon Park- a lot of opportunities there. If that is something that interests you please reach out to myself or one of our Board Members. We do not currently have a Chair for the Alcohol and Marijuana Committee but Ken Fuller reached out and wanted to include the license transfer for Oriental Garden so I am going to give him an opportunity to speak on this.

Ken Fuller: The state and city have passed this. Generally you get a pass supporting a license transfer. This license at Oriental Gardens has operated a very successful business there for many years just with a beer and wine license even though she is set up for other things. This would be a great opportunity for her and the community to diversify her income, she survived COVID. I've prepared a resolution and wanted to come and give you the opportunity to put in your two cents. The license was formally downtown but has been out of activity for several years.

[Liquor License Transfer Resolution](#)

Aye: 20, Nay: 1, Abstain: 2.

Presentations (limit 3 min. each, unless otherwise note)

(Traffic Calming moved to Old Business)

Old Business (Limit 6 min/item including discussion)

Traffic Calming Projects and Protected Bike Lane Pilot

Zak Hartman, Traffic Engineering Department: The Northeast Community legislative grant for traffic calming. Oklahoma Street was one of the top streets in the area, the average speed was 32 mph when it was posted at 20 mph. Augustine Dr at the bottom of the NECC area, traffic comes off Northern Lights fast. Duben Ave, Edwards St, Boston St, Patterson St. We can get a lot more speed humps in, you get a bang for your buck and that is a priority for the department. This is what we have based on data, school zones, and ongoing projects but we want to hear from the people that live in these areas.

Courtney Eppler: Did you say Nunaka was a separate project from the one that you're discussing but it is one that is also moving forward?

Zak Hartman, Traffic Engineering Department: Yes, there is a similar process going on for the project. I'm not sure that Twining is included in that one.

Courtney Eppler: Because we can get more neighbors. There are about four more neighbors that can't come tonight that are strongly voicing that there needs to be a plan at Twining and Perry because all the cars going through that project area are going by us.

Selina Metoyer: Is it possible to put a stop sign on Oklahoma and 6th?

Zak Hartman, Traffic Engineering Department: We can look at those intersections specifically. What the traffic program is good at is the speed humps because that is something physical that slows drivers down. Stop signs are not always effective because they can ignore them.

Meeting Space Location

Ron Meehan: We had talked about meeting space location last month and the original consensus was to move our meeting location to the new Cook Inlet Fab Lab. They had their grant opening last month and it is a tremendous new facility that is going to offer a lot of exciting opportunities. Ultimately, we want to have a location that is more centrally located for more people within the Northeast Community Council area. However, it was brought to our attention at last month's meeting that there is another alternative which is Creekside Park Elementary. Since that meeting, I followed up and had a conversation with David Christal who's the principal there. We want to make this an inclusive process and that we have a meeting location space that works the best for the most people. The school already has some events planned in advance and we wouldn't be able to meet there during those times but the only conflict is in November. We would meet in their gymnasium and I have confirmed we would be able to use the technology systems there including their microphone and speaker system. We also want to make sure a zoom hybrid option is something we could continue. We would look to make that shift to Creekside Park Elementary in January, I wanted to get a temperature check from all of you if there are any preferences in terms of staying in this space, moving to the Cook Inlet Fab Lab, or Creekside Park Elementary?

Stu Grenier: How does the size of the space compare?

Ron Meehan: One of the concerns I expressed after visiting the Fab Lab is that it might not be big enough. We usually have 20-30 people at our meetings in person. For that reason my preference would be the Elementary School but we want to hear from everyone.

David Christal: Hello, I'm the Principal at Creekside Elementary. If there was a conflict on a day the council was meeting you could likely use the space at Muldoon Elementary and we could help coordinate that. Anyone can rent our space, the one that does that most often is Boys and Girls Club. If you want to use the space it is better to rent it out earlier to avoid having it taken by other organizations.

Murray Crookes: There is a question only about the cost difference between them?

Ron Meehan: We would be able to use the space for free for both of them.

Selina Metoyer: Would we be able to meet at the Elementary School during the summer?

David Christal: Yes.

Meeting Location Straw Poll

Stay where we are: 4

Move to Cook Inlet Fab Lab: 2

Move to Creekside Park Elementary: 9

Ron Meehan: We are going to table the Muni Ranked Choice Voting Discussion next month because of how much business we have tonight but Stu would like to have a resolution introduced.

New Business (Limit 3 min/ item including discussion unless otherwise noted)

Balthazar Application for Marijuana Store Permit

Brenda Butler: We are applying for a special land use permit on Balthazar's behalf. The most important part of application with the city is getting community involvement and feedback. The store increases surveillance, cleans things up, and increases the tax revenue.

Arias Baltazar: I have been dealing with you guys for so many years. The last time we were here was ten years ago when I asked you for rezoning. We are here to ask for support to diversify our business.

Selina Metoyer: Is this going to be retail or growing? Having a marijuana store right next to Chanshtnu Muldoon Park is the other concern.

Brenda Butler: It's just a small little retail. I brought a plan of our operating and security plans. It does meet the sensitive plan use by the Muni and was extremely vetted before we even applied for this.

David Ulmer: Are you saying the 500 ft rule does not apply to this?

Brenda Butler: It's door of perimeter door to the property. This place meets the requirements. The Planning Department will not allow it to go through if it does not meet that requirement, it has to go through many avenues and this is just one step in the process.

Stu Grenier: I drive up to Willow often and there are marijuana shops everywhere and sometimes I think it's an advertisement for you to take a sample. Maybe downtown Muldoon doesn't need ten marijuana stores.

Bryan Wentz: You mentioned it was mentioned over 500 ft and there seems to be some disagreements are those measurements on your diagram?

Brenda Butler: Not on this diagram because the requirements between AMCO and the Muni are separate but when we apply for the special use land permit we will have that to scale plan and surveys. Any issues can be addressed that way.

Maurine-Rotary: Extremely concerned this will attract negative attention and visitors and it is close to a Middle School.

Brenda Butler: We are holding a zoom link to hear more community feedback on October 20th from 12-1.

MEETING TIME AND DATE: October 20th, 2023 at Noon (12pm)

MEETING LOCATION: 1431 Muldoon Road, Anchorage, Alaska 99504 and Via ZOOM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89512587675>

Meeting ID: 895 1258 7675

Passcode: 509504

One tap mobile

+16694449171,,89512587675#,,,,*509504# US

+16699006833,,89512587675#,,,,*509504# US (San Jose)

Homelessness in East Anchorage

George Martinez: Chanshtnu Muldoon park will not be repurposed to house people in the winter and it would be illegal for the municipality to do that. The Assembly has appropriated a few million dollars to the administration for cold weather shelter. Their full plan is to not have people out in the streets by activating these small cold weather shelters. Utilizing hotel rooms for non-congregate housing- another part of that strategy. Aviator hotel downtown has had that happening and was run really well. The Municipality does not run any of these things that we are talking about- we are working with providers.

Steve Farris: What are these providers charging for the bed?

George Martinez: Each organization has their own plans as business operators and it all goes through the Department of Health who approves the funding. They work out those service deals with the different organizations doing that work. All of these grants and contracts are publicly available and can be visited through the Assembly and Department of Health website. It is public information and you can break it down. People often say the problems of the city are because of the conflicts between the branches of government. The challenges we see with respect to the houseless are much more complex than just the political challenge of any term. We have gotten deeper into the hole because other areas have been underdeveloped and underrecognized like housing. The housing question means that if the average house is over \$450,000 but the average income is continuing to be stagnant or taper off, then what you have is people that are in older properties that are not able to be kept up and they are more likely to be displaced. Post-pandemic we have an incredible amount of housing insecurity. I want to be in front of next year- I don't want to be behind the ball going into next Spring and Fall.

Billy Chisum: There appears to be a real problem with the homeless in Chanshtnu Muldoon Park shooting firearms throughout the day. All hours of the day, evening, night, day. Is there anything that can be done to curb that? It's only a matter of time before a stray bullet hits an innocent bystander.

George Martinez: When I first started working on the mural the police showed up and asked if I had heard gunshots. This is happening, we know. Keep reporting with APD, with the emergency line and also the 311 line. The data does matter. The city tracks it and then we can leverage that data at some point.

Facebook Administration

Ron Meehan: There were concerns expressed about Facebook administration and how it is handled last meeting. We had a conversation about this at our subsequent board meeting and we want to ensure there is a process and that actions are transparent. Just to provide an overview for everyone, no members of our Board had any administration or ability to control what was being posted in the former Facebook group. We didn't have the ability to enforce our guidelines. There were posts made against both Facebook and the Northeast Community Council guidelines. We voted formally as a Board unanimously to authorize a new Northeast Community Council Facebook group at our last meeting for those reasons. Hopefully this will reduce some confusion, again we wanted to be clear and transparent about it and have that open conversation.

Community Announcements

Ron Meehan: We have a couple of vacancies on our Board right now so if you're interested in getting involved please reach out to me or any of our other Board members. We want to get you more involved. I also wanted to underscore that September is Hunger Action Month. In my day job I am the Policy and Advocacy Manager for the Food Bank of Alaska. Many of you are probably already aware but over the last couple of months and years we have seen an unprecedented level of food insecurity. One of our main

programs, The Emergency Food Assistance Program which is a federal food program, has seen a 74% decline since 2020. We have also seen a pretty precipitous decline in donations from corporate grocers. I wanted to put that out there and just say donations from individuals, volunteering, it all goes a long way in reducing hunger in Alaska. You can find out more information at [foodbankofalaska.org](https://www.foodbankofalaska.org) or drop donations off at 2192 Viking Dr.

Bob Reupke: I have worked with Lutheran Social Services for years and we have also seen a great need-keep us in mind too.

Ron Meehan adjourns meeting at 9:21PM

Upcoming NECC meetings: October 19, 2023

Respectively submitted by,

Ron Meehan, Northeast Community Council President