

RUSSIAN JACK COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

6:30 PM, Wednesday, October 11, 2023

At Zion Lutheran Church – 2100 Boniface Parkway

Present: Ed Leach, Lori Pickett, Kathleen Plunkett, Mercedes Colbert, Karen Bronga, Bill Wielchowski, Andrew Gray, James Holzenberg, Reb Hanson, Dan & Sherry Wright

Present via ZOOM: Kari McKitrick (Brown Jug), Kendra Kloster, Lindsey Hajduk, Daniel Holland, Dora Wilson

Meeting was called to order at 6:32 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. We are enjoying the beautiful snow starting to come down.

2. Legislative report (3 minutes each)

Sen. Bill Wielechowski (Seat K) The PFD went out October 3rd. A provision that if the price of oil is higher than projected, an additional \$500 will be paid next fall. Lots of input on neighborhood roads in need of repair to the tune of 2 billion dollars of need around Anchorage. Capital grants were reappropriated for parks – Nunaka Valley North or South, Ira Walker park are some Beth Nordlund has identified. Meeting with Enstar regarding gas contracts that will expire March 2024 (Homer Electric) and over the next couple years for Chugach Electric and Enstar. HillCorp controls 85% of natural gas leases in Cook Inlet. They don't plan to offer new contracts for the utility companies. Options are importing natural gas from Canada or somewhere else; a new gas pipeline. None of the options are cost effective. Alaska will be looking at even higher prices (already the highest in North America). We also are the most subsidized development.

Sen. Forrest Dunbar (Seat J) Forrest report attached to the minutes. There are plans to reinstitute Veteran red poppy day in Alaska – goes back to Flander's Field in WWI. He has drafted an amendment to renewable energy portfolio standard which credits utilities for using renewable energy and protects/restores salmon streams. DISCUSSION: A question about federal funding that has not been allotted as of October 1 and there are more immigrants coming. Wondering if the state can provide funding then be reimbursed, as we are inviting the Ukrainians, in particular; but not providing any tangible assistance. The state took in 1000 Ukrainian refugees that were provided assistance – 1 year rent – through AHFC which was the primary administrator. DISCUSSION on short term rentals – registration for Air BnB, but there are penalties for anything longer than short term. The needs regarding short-term rentals vary by community, so this is better decided at the community, rather than the state level.

Rep. Genevieve Mina (Seat 19) - no report

Rep. Stanley Wright – (Seat 22) - no report

Rep. Andrew Gray (Seat 20) 5:30 – 6:15 pm Zoom constituent meeting tomorrow night with topic of MOA shelter plan. Gary Stevens has a play about Ted Stevens at the PAC. History and future of mining in AK. November zoom will be about tenant and landlord rights.

Repgray.com. Townhall meeting will be taking place starting at 5:30 pm 2nd Thursday of each

month (on zoom). He will consider recording the meetings so people unable to attend can listen in at a convenient time.

3. Assembly report (3 minutes each)

Christopher Constant (Seat 1B) – no report

Daniel Volland (Seat 1L) – Special meetings tomorrow on the delayed housing contractor details. 150 maximum capacity at Solid Waste Services facility. CASA bond (Chugach Access Survey) spoke about creating access amenities (not just repaving roads). Installation of restrooms, or gazebos were some of the ideas originally discussed. But the result seems to be focused on roads. This seems similar to discussions on housing, which without adequate housing the burden of property taxes becomes greater. He would like to provide a presentation on the zoning consolidations with home initiative at a future meeting, if desired. 3 – 4 plex building requires more permitting, improvements and additional costs. DISCUSSION: Kathleen spoke about the impact to residents in the areas of those commuting to the trailheads and incorporating costs of maintenance. Lori – asked about the Solid Waste site criteria for residents (they have to be able-bodied as there is no working elevator). The priority of housing is non-congregate shelter – so those most able-bodied would be using the Solid Waste site.

Karen Bronga (Seat 5H) - October 16th is the date for the downtown encampment abatement, then Chanshtnu Park, then Cuddy Park. Aviator and Alex Hotels will be filled first, then the former Waste Services building renovations. Food service contract may end in December. Bean's Café would do it for free. Substance misuse ordinance testing for public employees – doesn't happen prior to employment; but for probable cause or if they are in an accident where substance misuse may have been a factor. Oral saliva sample is the type of testing that will be used. Chugach Access service area group – issue will be on the ballot in spring to help limited road service areas (to get to the trailheads). Expanding Basher trailhead with improvements on Basher Road. Honeybear (roads that go to McCugh Creek). Stewart Homestead trailhead needs a place for parking. Canyon Road is another one on the list. Paddleboat Café was red tagged after the earthquake and there is incentive to do something with that in the Goose Lake Master Plan.

George Martinez (Seat 5I) – no report

4. School board report (3 minutes each) – Dora Wilson - ASD is making progress in hiring.

They had a recent job fair and hired quite a few people to fill vacancies that also diversify their work force. \$15 million dollar five year grant for high school programs. Parent Connect letters to K – 3rd graders to advise parents on student progress / needs. Opportunity for input regarding school consolidations. DISCUSSION: Please invite AK Literacy Program to your job fairs. With growth charts in schools, did the information go out in their first language so parents could understand the information?

5. FCC report – Kathleen Plunkett – September FCC meeting with housing the homeless needs part of the discussion. Manager for FCC position is posted. Presentation on Community Councils Charter – Darrel Hess available to provide for us, if interested.

6. Capital Improvement Projects for RJCC area - A review from the minutes of November , 2022 – February, 2023 included highlights the need for some editing of the list on projects that

have been done; coming up with 3-5 priority projects to submit this year and larger projects that are taken care of by DOT; Forrest said many of the road projects are handled via state or city government; Ted provided a rubric to help us prioritize the list based on safety impacts, public health and impacts to quality of life and wellness, if it aligns with other Community Council priorities or plans, are their funds on hand for the project, and a total. Discussion focused on the rubric that was created last February and seeing if we need to update that list, and if any of the items have been completed. This is an area that could use improvement – some notice to the community council when any of these items have been completed or scheduled. Lindsey added the AMATS list that shows many of our rubric projects have been added, with recognition that it is a slow process. The link for that list is:

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=fa50e00e92f542db8b7e5d13ee7aff8e>

7. Neighborhood/Community Announcements - Kathleen asked a general question about HUD actions to address lack of housing issues in Anchorage. Their formula systematically underfunds smaller cities that have large homelessness populations. The Assembly has done a resolution and a letter was sent requesting HUD explain their funding. Legislators may also submit a resolution. An amendment to the AIDEA may incorporate housing space (lending). Northway Mall may have been sold (Hope Community Resources) that may become a shelter. Reb shared that 6th Avenue and Boniface used to have a Lion's Park (currently the unopened dog park area). We then had some discussion of the problems created by garbage and lack of restroom facilities in areas utilized by campers in Russian Jack Springs Park (long term 2 – 3 years) and Davis Park that do not abate camp in the winter. If they are not going to abate these camps, there must be services rendered to keep them from becoming garbage ridden. There was a bear found in one of the tents. They charge a fee for camping in other states (like \$40/month). There was also discussion of various speed limits along McCarrey, 6th Avenue and Mountain View.

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:56 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:
Sherry Wright, Secretary