

RUSSIAN JACK COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

6:30 PM, Wednesday, November 8, 2023

At Zion Lutheran Church – 2100 Boniface Parkway

Present: Ed Leach, Lori Pickett, Kathleen Plunkett, Andrew Gray, Joel Ribbens, Genieve Mina, Forrest Dunbar, Dan & Sherry Wright

Present via ZOOM: Kendra Kloster, Bill Wielechowski, Mercedes Colbert, Carl Jacobs
Lindsey Hajduk, Mai Xiong

Meeting was called to order at 6:32 pm by Vice President Lori

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. Bill Wielechowski – (Seat K) Session starts January 16. There is lots of momentum for Energy issues. Bill mentioned a Carbon offset bill (Tree Bill). Transmission upgrades have federal funding (need state matching). Railbelt CEO's agree before we get large scale energy projects we need to upgrade transmission systems. Hydro-resource upgrades (Rabbit Lake) are needed. It's a reliable resource – Dixon Creek diversion is one project. QUESTION: Will the state start planning leafy trees in the prospect of climate changes? There have been some discussions, but that would include ADF&G and Natural Resources Departments, to ensure we aren't including invasive species. DIGITAL EQUITY Plan? At least 1 billion dollars of federal funding are coming in and will go to areas that are underserved (basically rural Alaska). Rates would then be similar to urban area rates. There is an expectation that rates will drop everywhere once those come online.

Sen. Forrest Dunbar – (Seat J) Lots of discussions regarding affordable energy in anticipation of rate increases. Forrest provided a November update. (attached). He came from a Mining Association meeting tonight with discussion of need for graphite (for the new electric cars). Alaska has the largest supply of graphite, so discussions come to how to benefit Alaskans from our resources. Medicinal use of psychedelics for PTSD veterans is one of the topics introduced on his handout. QUESTION: Guardians of people under Alaska Law are supposed to be private, not under Office of Public Advocacy. Will research and get back to Ed. Lori asked about State reimbursement to nonprofits with grants? Taking months while largest grants are nonreimbursable. SNAP – a listening session is needed to allow individuals with English as a second language to get assistance and answers (with help of interpreters). Cleared out the old backlog, but now there is a new one.

Rep. Genevieve Mina – Seat 19 – Conduit to help those SNAP applicants that haven't been heard. HB 196 is the application process improvement bill. She spoke on Talk of Alaska recently, speaking about the food security issues. Food pantries are also struggling. HB191 is a bill that deals with Emergency Medical Unit to broaden responses to emergency calls (in particular stroke or heart attack calls). Celebrating Filipino Americans at several events around the state, discussing language barriers, immigration issues and where Filipinos can fill in gaps (example of teachers needed). 907-762-7227 is the Tree Hotline number (to report trees in or near power lines). AK Common Ground meeting tomorrow at King Street Brewery at 6 pm.

Rep. Stanley Wright – Seat 22 (Forrest Wolfe) no report

Rep. Andrew Gray - Seat 20 - Freshman caucus is working on energy issues. HB 184 is a short term rental bill – AirBnB sent a rep from San Francisco that expressed concerns about the bill. Renter’s Rights is the topic for tomorrow evenings Zoom Town Hall at 5:30 pm. Fair housing attorney Daniel Coon will be the guest speaker. In the process of hanging fliers for this event, he found a property in his neighborhood that shuts down for the winter season, but would be ideal affordable housing. The Assembly is looking for a change in housing. Investment in the middle of the city is needed. Last week’s pod cast dealt with indigenous women murders and Kendra was a guest speaker. Kathleen mentioned that HUD would be able to provide affordable housing current rates.

3. Assembly report (3 minutes each)

Christopher Constant Seat 1B – no report

Daniel Volland Seat 1L – no report

Karen Bronga Seat 5H (Genevieve Kikukawa)- Karen sent an email regarding a draft increase for RJSP funding from \$300,000 to \$600,000 with federal match for safety and ADA improvements at the park. An amendment to increase funding for inclusive playgrounds in our area.

George Martinez Seat 5I – no report

Sherry Wright shared the letter received from FCC regarding AO 2023-110, which aims to establish a permitting process to register and license short-term rentals in Anchorage, effective May 1, 2024. Comments are due by December 5th, so individuals are encouraged to comment since it comes up before our next meeting. Letter is included in meeting handouts.

4. School board report (3 minutes each) – Carl Jacobs provided an update. Tomorrow will be a remote learning day due to the winter storm currently underway. Graduation rate data has been reviewed and trying to find ways to improve. Comments and suggestions can be submitted to the ASD website. \$63 million for one year will be the next school bond request. Bond funds will be used for building safety improvements, based on where the primary threats generally are coming from and other specifics on where those funds are proposed is available on the board website. Better PTA / School Board communications are in the works. QUESTION on the reading assessments. Internal discussions with State Board of Education and where the line of proficiency is, with results expected in March, 2024. QUESTION on bond balance from Kathleen – he will get that information. Any updates on school closures? None being proposed for next year’s classes, but garnering community input on character of various schools. Most of the schools belong to MOA, so they would be turned back to the Municipality. Child care needs may be another use of underutilized elementary school spaces.

5. FCC report – Kathleen Plunkett – Transition into new manager hire is still ongoing. Overdose (Naloxone) Training was held with kits passed out at the last meeting.

6. Hmong Alaska Community Inc –Mai Xiong spoke to the council regarding the proposed Hmong American Veterans Memorial at Davis Park. Mountain View submitted a resolution of support. NECC will pass a resolution this month. Kathleen Plunkett made a motion to support the resolution. Sherry Wright 2nd. Ed Leach fully supports recognizing foreign veterans that have fought along American soldiers. Passed by unanimous consent. There is a Veteran’s Day celebration from 12 – 2 pm at American Legion Post 1 (840 W Fireweed Lane). We are invited.

7. Capital Improvement Projects for RJCC area – we discussed and approved this at the October meeting. The list just needs a few edits and can be sent.

8. Nominations for RJCC Officers – Retention of current officers. Kendra Kloster, President; Lori Pickett, Vice President; Sherry Wright, Secretary; Ed Leach, Treasurer; Kathleen Plunkett, Trustee and FCC Representative. Elections will be held in December with any other interested parties eligible to run.

9. Neighborhood/Community Announcements - Andrew Gray met with AK National Guard innovative readiness training staff that would like to do projects in Anchorage. Trail maintenance or refurbishing, remodel/construction projects would be on their list of ideal projects. They don’t just do infrastructure, they do cyber projects, health care projects. (They have done village relocations as another example). We can submit request to irt.defense.gov Any unit in the US could come. 2 year time line from application to project. Some potential items to submit included: RJ Chalet remodel; Dinosaur Park in Nunaka Valley and Williwaw Park; park on 6th Avenue that could use TLC. We can work up a resolution and touch base with a few fellow East Side Community Councils to build up our area in town. Kendra is interested in coordinating our CIP lists to garner support with neighboring community councils.

Next meeting is scheduled for December 13th at 6:30 pm and will be our annual Potluck.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:
Sherry Wright, Secretary