

# Minutes

Northeast Community Council (NECC)

November 16, 2023, | 7pm

Centennial Village- Multipurpose Room

9131 Centennial Circle, Anchorage, AK 99504

## **Board Members Present**

**Ron Meehan**, President | **Murray Crookes**, Vice President | **Selina Metoyer**, Member | **Stu Grenier**, Member | **Pamela Raygor**, Member | **Mary O'Loughlin**, Member | **Bob Reupke**, FCC Delegate

## **Ron Meehan calls meeting to order at 7:03PM**

90~ people were present virtually or in the room.

## **Pledge of Allegiance- Bob Reupke**

## **Board Roll Call - Murray Crookes**

## **Minutes Approval: October**

**Ron Meehan:** This is the first time in at least six months that we have had every Board member present at our general meeting. These are volunteer positions and we thank them for their time and commitment to the betterment of our community. We are currently in a transitional period with our Secretary position, minutes from the October meeting will be ready at the January meeting.

## **Treasurer's Update**

**Lyn Franks:** Reported \$1,709.41 in the bank account

## **FCC Report**

**Bob Reupke:** Mayor Bronson gave a snow removal report and the fact that he used MOA to help the State of Alaska to plow the roads, leaving subdivisions being unplowed. The Mayor's office said there are approximately 80 trees down on municipal property because of winds and rain. The municipality is currently working on next year's budget.

Margo Bellamy, School Board President, gave a report and said the school budget deficient was about \$90 million, but they have some money in the budget for unfilled positions and other money and the total budget deficit is \$65 million.

Kevin Barry, Associate Professor in Economics, College of Business and Public Policy, gave a report that was interesting. Bob Reupke relayed key statistics from the report to NECC council members and noted the report is available online.

FCC gave a report. They are trying to hire a new director. Current budget for a director is \$90,000 and in past years the director has earned well over \$100,000. It is up to the mayor and assembly to decide if they want to raise the budget to get a qualified director.

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

**Selina Metoyer:** Selina, Board Member of the Muldoon Farmers Market, presented a check of \$1,000 for the Food Bank of Alaska from the Muldoon' Farmers Market. Ron Meehan, temporarily resigned his role as presiding officer of the council meeting to Lyn Franks. Ron Meehan, representative of Food Bank of Alaska, accepted the check.

**Ron Meehan:** Food Bank of Alaska and partners will be giving out 12,000 Turkey's in the MatSu Valley as part of Thanksgiving Blessing. Information about it is at the meeting on flyers in the back.

**Laura Moy:** Wants speed humps on Twining Drive in Nunaka Valley. There are lots of little kids in the neighborhood and there are no sidewalks and parents have to put out signs and watch kids really closely.

Laura also called the city about plowing Twining drive and said that helped because there was a plow truck soon after calling.

**David Christal:** David is Principal of Creekside Park said it was good to have kids back in class. But there were safety concerns about people shoveling snow back into the sidewalks so kids do not have to walk on the road.

**Amy Simms:** Amy expressed concern about the Balthazar Marijuana Store Memorandum of Understanding and the proposed proximity of the store to the park and that it's not clear what kind of fencing will go up.

**John Cunningham:** John stated his kids play in the playground which is next to the proposed marijuana store. John expressed concern on the proximity of the proposed store to the park.

**Josh Green:** Stated he is a long time resident that went to Susitna elementary and former NECC council president. Josh expressed concern over the Baltazar Marijuana Store Opposition Resolution and that he felt the opposition resolution was picking on a certain family. Josh expressed concern the drafter of the resolution could be in competition with the proposed store, and if so, resolution should be withdrawn.

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

**Sen. Bill Wielechowski:** Snow removal has been topic of discussion lately and Bill has spoken to the State a lot about plowing lately. Glenn Highway, Muldoon, Debarr, and Boniface is a state road. Northern Lights is a state road, but from Lake Otis to Muldoon is plowed by the municipality. The state has a priority system for plowing roads with Glenn and Seward Highway being a priority 1. The Municipality diverted a significant amount of resources to plow 3 & 4 priority state roads which are primarily located in south Anchorage. That caused a cascading effect across town. Senator Dunbar and Bill got an additional \$500,000 in state funding for plowing roads this year.

Bill's office has gotten few calls, but most calls are related to SNAP benefits and backlog.

Bill noted the state is receiving \$206 million for a new grid that will support more solar and more wind. It is critical because Hilcorp controls 90% of the basin energy resources in Cook Inlet and Hilcorp is refusing to drill.

Bill addressed questions from NECC council members related to SNAP backlog and reasons why there is a backlog.

There was a question from a council member on if Bill had received his email related to the North Fork of Chester creek being dry as a couple year's ago there were salmon in it. Bill's staff responded they have not received information from JBER or otherwise on why the creek is dry.

CONTACT: Phone: 907-269-0120, Email: [Senator.Bill.Wielechowski@akleg.gov](mailto:Senator.Bill.Wielechowski@akleg.gov)

**Ron Meehan:** Helping Bill address the NECC council members questions...Ron noted the state had a backlog of almost 70% of the 92,000 Alaskans who were supported in 2022 and that number fell to just 26,000. Factors playing into that is an antiquated legacy system that hasn't been updated in more than 40 years that one person at the DPA knows how to navigate and has been manually entering in information, every single person had to recertify every 6 months (but has increase that to 12 and 24 months since). There were two teams at the state working, one on backlog and one on new applications that were coming in. The USDA at the federal level came to observe the program in the summer and said the state could not work on the backlog and could only work on new applications. There is legislation in process to simplify and remove certain requirements that are difficult to investigate and prove.

**Forrest Wolfe:** Forrest is speaking for representative Rep. Stanley Wright. The Wright office has been working on the NECC capital budget requests. Forrest thanked Ron for providing the capital project list and Wright's office has submitted those to the Governor's office. Forrest thinks there is a good chance of getting significant funding for capital projects given the price of oil right now.

CONTACT: Phone: 907-269-0240, Email: [Representative.Stanley.Wright@akleg.gov](mailto:Representative.Stanley.Wright@akleg.gov)

**Rep. Donna Mears:** Donna said we keep adding lane miles of roads but have not increased operations and maintenance budget. Most times it is okay, but if there is stress the snow plowing can collapse.

Last week Donna was at the Alaska miners conference last week and said it was clear there that there is also under resourcing for state permitting as well.

Donna expressed taking money from the permanent fund dividend to balance the state budget is not sustainable or equitable. With the tight labor market the state is doing a wage study to compare cost of public vs. private sector. Donna along with other members of House, and Senators, have been working to

do a cost factor study for schools as well. There is also legislation to categorize eligibility for SNAP benefits that will make the process faster.

CONTACT: Office: 907-465-3438, Cell 907-632-6382, Email: [Rep.Donna.Mears@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Donna.Mears@akleg.gov)

**Rep. Cliff Groh:** Has been helping constituents call and getting them information about snow removal. Cliff has also been working to get solutions on the shortage of natural gas for southeast Alaska. Clif continues to work on school funding and working to relieve the staff shortages. Clif stated there was a terrible article in ADN and that is sexual assault, abuse, and murder of children in the state of Alaska.

Clif stated on Saturday November 18th from 5pm – 7pm he will host a meeting to get feedback from the community and is providing milkshakes at Kava's.

CONTACT: Phone: 907-952-3353, Email: [Representative.Cliff.Groh@akleg.gov](mailto:Representative.Cliff.Groh@akleg.gov)

**Sen. Loki Tobin:** Loki spoke about her experience at the Council of State Governments West where Loki is on the housing and education committees. Loki is also being recognized as a top 20 state legislator under 40 years of age.

Loki gave a verbal presentation on Foundation Formulas. Alaska's foundation formula has remained relatively unchanged and Alaska is the only state to get federal impact aid at this time because there are so many in the state that do not pay property tax due to living on a military base. Loki encouraged members to read about foundation formulas on the Alaska senate website under SB52.

CONTACT: Phone 907-465-3704, Email: [Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov)

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

**George Martinez:** George encouraged NECC council members to make calls regarding plowing for the snow storm. The assembly members are also making calls to those persons at higher levels. The funding is in place to respond to the snow storm and improvements in service will come later in the year.

There are amendments to reverse budget cuts to administration staffing. Budget cuts are causing backlogs and other inefficiencies.

There was a housing action summit at UAA. Experts came to UAA to discuss strategies and to redevelop vacant and abandoned properties. Affordable housing and Land Trust was allocated \$1.5 million to redevelop identified properties.

There is a study for Northeast Community Council Hub to have a transit hub near the Muldoon Library. There is tremendous opportunity that is coming to the East Anchorage corridor.

**Karen Bronga:** Karen relayed information that people that have plowed roads for 20 years have not seen this amount of wet and heavy snow. This was a freak incident, and on December 5 there will be a debrief on the response to the snow storm.

We are in the throws of budget season and the federal gov will put \$600,000 into Russian Jack if the municipality puts \$600,000 into bonding. Also the assembly is looking for park funding for Davis park given it's homelessness issues.

Karen discussed there is an ordinance proposed for short term rentals. VRBOs and AirBnBs would have to pay fee of \$400 and operators would have to be within an hour of their short term rental. Public Testimony is December 5. For the ordinance, the aim is to just know how many short term rentals there are and to encourage use of long term vs short term rental.

Karen discussed "Anchorage Goes" plan and looking to put out 20-30 flush toilets in the city. The restrooms are being used in cities with homelessness problems. They are very expensive, but the cost include 20 years of maintenance provided for.

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

**Jim Curran, Muldoon Public Library:** Jim stated the Muldoon Mall is an oasis and it has been plowed. The library is reopened following the snowstorm.

**Dora Wilson, School Board:** Dora thanked Senator Tobin for support of education funding. Dora thanked Principal, David Christal, for coming to the community council meeting.

In regards to the remote learning and the snow storm ASD primary focus is for the safety of students and staff.

The bond proposition for ASD on the April 2024 ballot is being worked on.

Regarding Academies of Anchorage a follow up community meeting is convening on December 6, 2023. The October 12 meeting was impressive, and the future meeting intent is to determine what academies will be placed in what schools and what career pathways will be offered.

Next school board meeting is on Tuesday, November 21<sup>st</sup>.

### **Committee Updates (limit 2 min. each)**

**Lyn Franks, Chair of CIP Committee:** A CIP Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, November Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> at 6pm, at the Centennial Village- Multipurpose Room. The committee will prioritize the list of projects for the NECC area. The committee is also looking for at items that might need to be on the list.

**Stu Grenier, Chair of Parks & Trails and Dog Park Committees:** There are now two bridges that are installed at Chanshtnu Muldoon Park. There are also signs installed at Centennial Park and bear boxes. There is lots of volunteering work that is going into the trails and Centennial Park.

**Steve Johnson, Chair of Alcohol & Marijuana Committee:** In regard to the proposed Balthazar Marijuana Store there are glowing recommendations from many of the businesses that are in Fairbanks and community support for the group Balhtazar is partnering with. Balhtazar is partnering with is someone who will delve into the community in a positive way.

There is a new Costco warehouse going up in Tikhatnu Commons

There is a local business called the Pink Cadillac that is trying to get an alcohol license from another company in town. The company is waiting for approvals to get the license. 349 Muldoon is the proposed location of the restaurant.

### **Presentations**

No presentations this month.

### **Old Business (Limit 6 min/item including discussion)**

#### **Hmong Veteran Memorial at Davis Park Resolution**

**Mai Xiong:** Thanked the council for letting her present at the prior meeting. Expressed that the memorial is on the boundary of the NECC border and as such Parks and Rec is requesting community approval. The design of the veteran's memorial is based on the one in Fairbanks, of which, the design has been proven to withstand the elements.

**Ron Meehan motions to vote on the resolution, Lyn Franks seconds. The resolution passed unanimously.**

#### **Muni Ranked Choice Voting Resolution**

**Stu Greener:** There were amendments made to the resolution presented.

**Ron Meehan:** As there are amendments the resolution will be tabled till the next meeting.

### **Homelessness in East Anchorage**

**George Martinez:** Discussed capacity of beds at the former Solid Waste Services administration building. A special assembly meeting was recently held and it was voted to increase the capacity to 250 beds.

Some homeless are choosing to stay outside and there are some abatements planned on the camps, especially at Williwaw Park.

There are not enough beds, and the need for facilities, which includes hotels, begs questions about capacity. There is a mandate for facilities to open when temp goes below a certain amount. The city administration is getting information on warming centers and where they will be. There are concerns that

warming facilities are not enough. There is not a strong plan or network of warming centers/shelters and related facilities.

The Department of Health told us that some folks refused to go into the congregate shelter facility

People have come to the assembly to thank them for the Alex Hotel facility that houses the homeless. Fundamentally, the operator has been able to check everything and operators go into rooms to do checks. There is a degree of regulation whereby the homeless guests are not that comfortable, which means the Alex Hotel is not a luxury hotel for the homeless.

**Karen Bronga:** There are churches that are ready, willing and able to open their doors to be warming centers and Karen is looking at churches and buildings that fit criteria that do not cost too much to renovate. Karen is also going through a listing of vacant buildings in the city that can become a shelter.

Covenant House is completely full and they are seeing 3-4 overdoses a week.

Karen provided a link to the shelter dashboard in the Zoom Meeting Chat.

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/d6f142677f5c485fb58c5aa25af9838c>

**Charles England:** Charles stated he was a pastor in the area and stated that a church opening its doors would make huge liability issues. Charles asked if there has been any research into how to limit the increase of the homelessness problem?

Discussion was held by various NECC council members regarding this question. George Martinez commented that housing has increased tremendously since 2020 when emergency shelters were opened as a result of COVID-19, but the number of homeless has not decreased since COVID-19.

### **Baltazar Marijuana Store Opposition Resolution**

**Stu Greener:** Presented the resolution and discussed the proposed marijuana store location is next to Chanshtnu Muldoon Park which includes elaborate playground equipment and other facilities that draw kids and adults alike. One poll by Stu was taken at the Muldoon Farmers' Market found 24 votes against having a marijuana sales business at said location, 4 in favor, and 4 abstains. Also, Balthazar has not honored previous commitments to the Northeast Community Council to not sell cars on his lot and Stu respects local business, but states this is not the right location for the Marijuana store.

Discussion was held whereby various NECC council members gave opinions on the resolution and asked questions about the proposed store. The topics of comments were around proximity of the store to Chanshtnu Muldoon Park, the proximity of car washes held by children at the American Legion next door, the number of children that would pass the store, the proximity of homelessness camps to the store, the language of the opposition resolution, Balthazar's standing as a good member of the community, concerns over free samples that could be offered, and those eligible to vote at the council meeting on the resolution and verification of their eligibility, among other comments.

**Rick Gregorin motioned to table the vote on the opposition resolution until the next council meeting. Brendan seconded.**

**Aye: 17 Nay: 46. Motion did not pass.**

**A vote was held on the opposition resolution. Aye: 20 Nay: 43 Abstain: 6. Resolution did not pass.**

### **Balthazar Marijuana Store Memorandum of Understanding**

**Brenda Butler, Paralegal and representative of Balthazar:** Gave a verbal presentation regarding the Memorandum of Understanding highlighting Balthazar's partnership with store operator Good LLC. Good LLC had seven recommendation letters printed out for NECC council members at the meeting. Other additional letters were not printed for the meeting. Good has never had a violation since opening in 2017.

**Trevor Haines, Good LLC:** Trevor spoke about Good LLC and appreciated the community council.

**Pamela Raygor:** Proposed adding two bullet points to the Memorandum of Understanding regarding addition of 1. of the health and safety of underage children and prohibiting free samples of marijuana. 2. A six foot site obscuring fence between Chanshtnu Muldoon Park and Balthazar property.

Brenda Butler agreed with the addition of two bullets and they were accepted as friendly amendments.

Discussion was held regarding additions of other bullets to the Memorandum of Understanding, however no additional bullets were added.

**Murray Crookes motion to vote on the Memorandum of Understanding. Selina Metoyer seconded. Aye: 45 Nay: 9 Abstain: 5. Memorandum of Understanding passed.**

**Next Meeting Location: Creekside Park Elementary**

**Ron Meehan:** Announced the Next General Meeting Location is Creekside Park Elementary. The Board will do a walkthrough of the space before the meeting.

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

**Mountain City Christian Academy Infant Care and Preschool Expansion**

**Jessica Parker, Superintendent of Mountain City Movers and Christian Academy:** Verbally presented the plan of expanding capacity for Little Mountain Movers. Jessica presented that the facilities to be used are secure, available, and the school is currently fully staffed. Jessica said the city's planning and zoning commission will be looking over the site plans soon. Jessica stated the reason why they are expanding is because there is a need in the community for it.

Discussion was held around eligibility of funds from proposition 14 to be used for funding of the expansion and that 30% of students at the academy received DACA funding.

**Pamela Raygor:** Asked why the expansion is happening now and how many? How was it made possible and why not sooner? And in a certification from January 2023 there was a report from the municipality that staff had not completed training? Is there priority for families in the school?

**Jessica Parker:** In response to the questions: The expansion is from 100 to 300 children. Expansion was made possible due to vacating space that was previously utilized for other facilities and the need for the expansion is apparent right now as they have the largest waitlist they have ever had. Also, for the certifications, there has been a staff meeting to address the uncompleted training. The priority is first come, first serve. Additionally, the preschool is targeting advertising in the NorthEast area. Expansion will be ready by March 2024.

**Selina Metoyer motioned to express support for the Little Mountain Movers expansion, Stu Grenier seconded.**

**Aye: 25 Nay:1 Abstain: 2. Expressed Support for Little Mountain Movers Expansion passed.**

**Community Announcements**

**Murray Crookes:** Stated there was earlier mention that there wasn't a public hearing on Costco in Tikahatnu Commons. However there was a public hearing per message from Karen Bronga in the Zoom chat.

**Selina Metoyer:** Stated the Muldoon's Farmer's Market is looking for more board members and volunteers to provide food safety for the neighborhood. Selina's contact information is in the NECC meeting agenda. The board is looking for younger members to keep it going and this summer will be the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the Market.

**Ron Meehan:** Noted there is still a NECC board vacancy.

**George Martinez:** At the Alaska Native Heritage Museum 1pm-6pm this Saturday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, there will be a Holiday Bazaar hosted by Alaska Black Business Expo. There will be holiday gift wrapping, soulful holiday music, planning, resources, food, shopping, and pictures with Santa.

**Ron Meehan adjourns meeting at 9:48PM**

**Upcoming NECC meetings: January 18, 2023**

**Ron Meehan:** Next General Meeting Location is Creekside Park Elementary at 7pm, January 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Respectively submitted by,**

**David Weber, Volunteer Interim Secretary**