

**Rogers Park Community Council
Meeting Minutes
December 11, 2023, 7:00-9:00pm
Rogers Park Elementary School Library**

Officers:

President, Scott McMurren
Vice President, Jill Klein
Secretary, Cassandra Raun
Treasurer, Sara Dykstra
Immediate Past President, Pete Mjos
FCC Representative, Linda Chase

Scott McMurren called the meeting to order at 7:03pm

Cassandra Raun established quorum

Review and approval of the November 13, 2023 meeting minutes - Pete Mjos moved to approve, Jill Klein second, minutes approved by acclamation

Treasurer's report, Sara Dykstra - total balance was 930.09, we just had an expense of \$19 today for office supplies so we are down to \$911.09

Scott McMurren read the announcements: Next meeting is January 8th, here at the Rogers Park Elementary School Library, in person and on Zoom

Be sure and sign up for our newsletter. Please encourage your neighbors to do so as well:
<https://rogersparkcommunitycouncil.eo.page/vp1z2>

School Board Report:

Carl Jacobs - The Board is engaged in the discussion for the upcoming fiscal year. There is a survey going around for the community, parents, educators, students, and administrators to give their priorities for the budget for next year. The survey is at asdk12.org and will be up for a few weeks. Please consider being part of the conversation.

Alaska Legislative reports:

Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson - She had the privilege of visiting Mt. Edgecomb High School, a public boarding school in Sitka, she received a 6 hour tour of the campus. The campus houses more than 400 students, it was very impressive. Senator Gray-Jackson is the chair of legislative council. In 2018 the Juneau Community Foundation donated a building to the legislature to address housing shortages during session. They also donated \$2 million toward renovations for the building and the building was converted to 32 brand new apartments to house interested legislators and staff. Housing will be based on seniority. The Senator's office is working on transitioning to Juneau for the upcoming session, but will be in her Anchorage office until January 11th. Please stop by! The update on the sound barrier project is that construction will start this summer with the funds available and Senator Gray-Jackson will work this session to secure the remaining funds for final completion in the future. Please see a list of her legislative priorities below.

Assembly reports:

Meg Zaletel - Last Tuesday the assembly took up the Mayors vetoes to the budget and overrode all of those vetos. They are working on implementing mission critical pay for snow operators. The funding is authorized to start in 2024 to insure that snow operators are up and running when needed. The Assembly passed their legislative package which focuses on three main things: ports, homelessness and behavioral health, with a fourth emerging priority around energy. Two bond items for your radar: one is the Chugach Service Area Bond, that one is going to have work sessions. Meg wants to understand how it intersects with the Anchorage Road Service and Drainage Bond before making a determination. The other bond is the Anchorage Goes bond, the public restrooms bond.

Felix Rivera - Thankful that the assembly was able to override the Mayoral vetoes. With regard to snow plowing, there was a meeting last week and Felix's take away was that the Mayor's office is not intending to make any sweeping changes to the current plan in terms of equipment or personnel. Felix and several others are pushing the administration to plan for different scenarios. Climate change is impacting our community. With regard to homelessness, Felix is keeping an eye on the emergency cold weather shelter. So far he thinks that things are going fairly well. They are working on making sure that they are working with a housing first model and that they are focusing on transitioning people from shelters into housing and housing supports within 90 days. Felix is tracking how stably housed those individuals are. They are also looking at the model that Houston, Texas is using. Anchorage is looking at mirroring what Houston has done. Three things made Houston a success: housing, supports to go with that housing as folks need them, and the subsidy that goes with paying for that housing unit. The Anchorage pilot program is looking at housing 150 people by the beginning of April. December 19th there will be a vote on this initiative. The goal is housing moving away from cold weather shelter.

There was a question and discussion about some of the proposed zoning changes regarding R2M, R2A and Title 21. Tuesday the 19th is the next meeting and Meg Zaletel encouraged members to attend the assembly meeting or comment via email or public testimony.

Meg Zaletel - Last week they had their first government to government work session with the Native Village of Eklutna to discuss the Eklutna River Restoration plan. The draft plan issued by the owners is now open for public comment. <https://eklutnahydro.com/documents/> Use the Contact Us form on the website to submit comments. There will be a couple of public meetings in January.

There was a question regarding the opportunity for public testimony on the upcoming zoning changes. Meg explained that the Title 21 amendments have already run through the planning and zoning commission regarding 3 and 4-plexes, making it easier to build 3 and 4-plexes in the municipality. That work has already happened and will be before the Assembly on December 19th. That work is separate and distinct from the Home Initiative that will come before the Assembly in March for public testimony and then come back again in June with another opportunity for public testimony.

Community Discussion:

Mel Langdon - gave a presentation regarding removal of chokecherry trees along the Chester Creek Trail north of Rogers Park and within our neighborhood. There are chokecherry/Mayday/Bird Cherry trees on private property and in our greenbelts and parks. Mel gave an overview of the history, the reasons why chokecherry trees are undesirable and what can be done from here. Her presentation is available for review upon request. Chokecherry trees crowd out native vegetation, they are toxic to moose and they have impacts on insects that are important for fish. Mel is wondering what the barriers are for individual property owners to remove their chokecherry trees? What incentives might encourage property owners to remove them? Regarding community areas, particularly Maplewood Spur and down the Juneau Street Spur, are there enough volunteers from our community council to coordinate a weed pull effort? We aren't going to be able to eradicate these trees. It is going to be about containing and controlling. It's going to be a longer term process. We'd need several pulls a summer. Maybe we could get Parks to take out some of the big trees, we could possibly create a grant application. And maybe we could incentivize the effort. If you want to help, please contact Mel.
contact: mellenlangdon@gmail.com

Ron Alleva added some commentary and lived experience regarding the concerns surrounding chokecherry trees.

Committee reports:

Transportation - Dave Evans - regarding the DOT project to upgrade Fireweed Lane from Seward Highway to Spenard Road: they started surveying but got shut down by snow. They don't have their public communication plan outlined yet but they do have RPCC identified as a stakeholder. DOT plans to visit stakeholders, including RPCC, early in the year.

Crime and Safety - Dave Morgan commented that he and some others are interested in forming and chairing the Crime and Safety Committee and the Homelessness Committee

Jim Richardson presented on concerns regarding helicopter usage and noise at Merrill Field. There is a protocol that has been used for several decades, but there are proposed changes to helicopter usage that ignores that protocol. Merrill Field will be hosting a public meeting to discuss the airfield's Instrument Flight Procedures. Please attend this meeting to learn about the procedures, ask questions, and provide your comments to the project team:

Date: Wednesday, December 13, 2023

Time: Noon – 1:00 pm

Location: Fairview Recreation Center

Marshall Severson spoke regarding the meeting as well and stated that Kolby Hickel, interim director, is requesting questions in advance of the meeting if possible. If you get your questions in early you may have a better chance of being heard.

Closing Comments for the Good of the Order

Tiffany Gomez spoke about her experience with increasing property crime on her street and theft in her yard. She had a bike stolen from her back yard that had been locked to her house under her deck. She and some neighbors were able to locate and retrieve the bike from Jacobsen Park, but the police refused to make any arrests. She is frustrated and angry because she is affected by the concerns of theft, prowlers and neighborhood park destruction on a daily basis and the city isn't doing anything about it. She asked that someone address these concerns.

Other members spoke about recent experiences with crime and physical threats to community members safety within College Village.

Members spoke about Neighborhood Watch and neighbors collaborating to communicate quickly and effectively when there is a concern. Getting everyone's email addresses, names and phone numbers goes a long way. Getting to know one another is important. The more people that communicate regarding a police case number, the better the response. Members spoke about asking the Assembly to take up this issue and the possibility of RPCC adopting a resolution asking the Assembly to do so.

Pete Mjos - there was a question about rooming houses being used as a solution for affordable housing. Per Meg, Rooming Houses are permitted by right in R3-R4A and B-1A thru RO, Conditional use in R-2M and R5-R9. Pete says that there are at least 3 rooming houses in Rogers Park right now that aren't in any of those zonings, so it is very common. It must be explored as solution to our housing crisis. Rooming houses are individual homes that have been converted to house several people as a more affordable housing option.

Hope everyone has a wonderful holiday season. HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

Next meeting: January 8, 2024, 7:00-9:00pm

Sara Dykstra moved to adjourn, Pete Mjos second, meeting adjourned at 8:56pm.

Notes from Senator Gray-Jackson:

The following is a list of my office's legislative priorities for the upcoming session.

Juneteenth (SB 22): Make Juneteenth an observed legal state holiday.

Use of Force Registry (SB 23): Establish a use-of-force database that will be overseen by the Department of Public Safety which will collect reports of use of force by a municipal police officer, municipal correctional facility employee, probation officer, parole officer, correctional officer, state trooper, village public safety officer or regional officer.

Mental Health Education in Schools (SB 24): Amends existing health education curriculum to include mental health curriculum in all K-12 health classrooms to adequately educate students on vital information about mental health symptoms, resources, and treatment.

Asian American/Pacific Islander Program (SB 131): Teaching students in our Kindergarten through 12th-grade education system about the contributions of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities to the economic, cultural, social, and political development of the United States could be greatly beneficial and would allow students to feel empowered and to understand their ethnic identities as well as their civic duty.

Education for Deaf & Hearing Impaired (SB 143): (Companion Bill HB 111) Children who are deaf or hard of hearing have the right to accommodations and access to academic instruction, school services, and extracurricular activities in their primary language. Access to their primary languages allows them to benefit from all services and programs at their school and to fully access education and society.

Stay at Work/Return to Work: I plan to introduce a bill that adds a Return-to-Work Coordinator to State Statutes to assist with planning for individuals who experience on the job injuries resulting in compensable time loss injuries. The program will help supervisors manage employee injury, illness, and disability and ensure that employees can return to the workplace as quickly and safely as possible.