

RUSSIAN JACK COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

6:30 PM, Wednesday, January 10, 2024

At Zion Lutheran Church – 2100 Boniface Parkway

Present: Ed Leach, Lori Pickett, Kathleen Plunkett, Dan & Sherry Wright

Present via ZOOM: Kendra Kloster, Bill Wielechowski, Andrew Gray, Ted Eischeid, Maxine, Genevieve Mina, Dora Wilson, James Smallwood, Jr, Stanley Wright, Forrest Dunbar

Meeting was called to order at 6:31 pm by President Kendra Kloster and then led by Vice President Lori Pickett.

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) Senate bi-partisan coalition is meeting this week.

Education, public employee retention, energy issues will be focus of discussions. Session begins January 16. Legislation includes SB 99 financial literacy in schools, SB 135 AK Work and Save (retirement investment opportunities for small businesses), SB 152 Community energy facilities – solar energy regulatory adjustments. Maxine is a new staffer with Bill. Ted asked about attempted override of Governor vetos (takes 75 % vote and a joint session). State of the State address will be held on January 15th.

Sen. Forrest Dunbar – (Seat J) He has prefiled bills that he spoke of last month. Looking forward to doing good work. Priorities of education, energy and defined benefits for employee retention. Concerned about school closures in Anchorage if the legislators don't vote to override Governor budget.

Rep. Genevieve Mina – Seat 19 – Attending a Medicaid town hall meeting tonight. Couple of issues her office is working on – Senators for American Progress to talk about rank choice voting in Alaska; Alaska Common Ground panel on renewable energy; Immigration roundtable was held earlier this week in order to talk about what Alaska can do to help new arrivals survive. HB 196 Snap, HB 191 Emergency Response Systems, bill to help small businesses recovering from COVID closures. Lori thanked her for the opportunity to participate in the immigration roundtable.

Rep. Stanley Wright – Seat 22 - HB 28 marijuana conviction clearing; HB 51 refrigerated firefighter bill didn't make it through; Emergency medical services and records waiting senate hearing; Associate professional licensing to create a tier system (6 months waiting to get services for autistic son) allows you to have your masters and get your hours without having to someone else sit along side you; Compact bill allows Alaskans to get health care sooner – allows people to come from other states and work here; Companion bill for Juneteenth.

Ed recently had to replace a smoke detector and found he is not supposed to throw it away in the trash, due to components that are radioactive. The recycle center wouldn't take it, store wouldn't take it, the manufacturer wouldn't take it back. The state working with the MOA can organize a container that will last 10,000 years and invite all those interested in participating to dispose of these properly.

Rep. Andrew Gray - Seat 20 - Bettye Davis pool is still closed. They have a few scholarships available for lifeguards and have a few people that are participating in the scholarship, so we should have that pool open again soon. [Recreate.com/lifeguard](https://www.recreate.com/lifeguard) has info on the scholarship. HB 220 - Looking at a 6% statewide bed tax to raise money; HB 225 Election records to release all ballot data the day after the elections. January 11 at 5:30 pm – constituent zoom meeting. [Repregray.com](https://repregray.com) has the links. Spoke about the guardian crisis in Anchorage. Cook Inlet Housing Authority has been building housing in Alaska and provides a good model for making housing work.

3. Assembly report (3 minutes each)

Christopher Constant Seat 1B – no report

Daniel Volland Seat 1L – no report

Karen Bronga Seat 5H (Genevieve Kikukawa)- no report

George Martinez Seat 5I – no report

4. School board report (3 minutes each) – Dora Wilson provided the report. There will be a bond on the April ballot which includes planning, design and construction projects. FY 2025 budget discussions are ongoing. They have a 98 million dollar deficit. January 23 is next School Board meeting.

Questions: How much is the total bond? \$62 million. How much savings is there to use to cover the deficit? Potential of bringing the savings down to 5%, which would mean \$75 million of the savings. They will make up the difference with unfunded positions – at this point how many vacancies are in ASD? Doesn't have that number but can get it. A few hundred vacancies. Teachers just want to teach and the constant budget cuts distracts from that mission.

5. FCC report – Kathleen Plunkett – there was no meeting in December. Doesn't have the agenda for the January meeting.

6. Review RJCC letter outlining community concerns and ideas Discussed that we would like to see the unused commercial properties in Anchorage used for low income housing. We should include the mayor and assembly in the distribution of this letter. There are a lot of abandoned properties in Anchorage that should be utilized. Council members are encouraged to review the letter and send our edits to Kendra.

7. Neighborhood/Community Announcements - Anchorage Diversity Health Fair Saturday, January 13, 2024 at Loussac Library from 11 am to 3 pm. Alaska Literary Program Annual Report was provided by Lori (included in meeting documents). Ole' Anchorage has an education program for 50+ aged people. Spring registration starts Monday. They offer a variety of classes. [Oleanchorage.org](https://oleanchorage.org) Jack & Jill is putting on a food drive at 4600 DeBarr Road from 1 pm to 4 pm on January 15. Kendra will post on our Facebook page.

Next meeting is scheduled for February 14th at 6:30 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 7:24 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:
Sherry Wright, Secretary