

# Minutes

Northeast Community Council (NECC)

January 18, 2024 | 7pm

Creekside Park Elementary- Gymnasium

7500 E 6th Ave, Anchorage, AK 99504

## Board Members Present

**Ron Meehan**, President | **Murray Crookes**, Vice President | **Lyn Franks**, Treasurer | **Selina Metoyer**, Member | **Stu Grenier**, Member | **Pamela Raygor**, Member | **Mary O'Loughlin**, Member

**Ron Meehan calls meeting to order at 7:00PM and provided a land acknowledgement.**

40~ people were present virtually or in the room.

## Pledge of Allegiance- Murray Crookes

## Board Roll Call - Murray Crookes

## Minutes Approval: [November](#)

**Murray Crookes motioned to approve the November 16, 2023 general membership council meeting minutes; Mary O'Loughlin seconded. None opposed.**

**November 16, 2023 general membership council meeting minutes approved.**

## Treasurer's Update

**Lyn Franks:** Reported \$1,709.41 in the bank account. There will be a deduction made soon for putting up Muldoon lights.

**Ron Meehan:** The state legislators requested the legislative report section of the NECC agenda be moved up in time as the legislators will be in session at 8pm.

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

**Sen. Bill Wielechowski:** Thanked Ron for the accommodation of changing the time for NECC legislative reports. The three priorities to address for the Sen. Bill's office are education, energy, and returning to a defined benefit system. More progress will be heard on the defined benefit system in the coming weeks.

An increase in base student allocation was passed last year. A one-time increase in funding was proposed this year. Half of the increase in base student allocation from last year, ~\$384 per student, was vetoed by Governor. The legislature has 5 days to override the veto in a joint session. The House voted yesterday 20-20 to go into joint sessions to override the veto, which resulted in a failed vote, as you need 21 to go into joint session. However some votes did change today so the Senate was invited to floor at 8pm tonight. There is a complicated series of events that occurred, but the one-time base student allocation bill got put into another bill that deals with internet for schools, then the house rules committee added a lot of other things that the governor wants. So now it is a giant omnibus education bill. The House is taking public testimony on Saturday, January 21, 2024. You can also write your state legislature representative to let them know how you feel about the bill, SB 140.

Bill wanted to address last council meeting question of what happened to the water at the north fork of Chester Creek. Bill's staff has spoken several times to the habitat division of Alaska Department of Fish & Game, but Fish & Game stated they are not aware of any work that was done on the north fork and are investigating. Bill's staff has reached out to other state departments but have heard nothing on how or why water from the north fork was diverted if it was diverted. Bill will report to the council when he hears more.

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

**Corey Alt, Chief of Staff, Rep. Donna Mears:** Rep. Donna is unable to join this council meeting due to having to prepare to go to the floor. Donna has been very active in food security legislative task force. As part of that Donna took a trip to Kotzebue touring some supply chain infrastructure of AC stores with some

other members of the task force and Rep. Thomas Baker, who represents the area. Donna's office is excited to see some legislative developments and expect a bill from the governor in the coming weeks to address some of recommendations from the task force report that came out in fall 2023. Donna's office is hopeful that it will be a good bill and will address the bill through the committee process. Donna's office is excited about this opportunity for bi-partisan coordination and optimistic we can get something done on this issue. Donna is very focused on the issues being presented tonight and there is a newsletter coming out on Monday, January 22, 2024. Contact Donna via email to get on the list for the newsletter.

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

**Cameron Ebersold:** Cameron is speaking for Rep. Clif Groh. Groh's office priorities are K-12 education, returning to defined benefits, energy policy, and important work of fiscal planning. As a topic of research requested by Stu Grenier, Cameron stated Little Mt Susitna Wind Project is expected to begin construction next year or in 2026 and comes online in 2026 or 2027. Once online the representatives of the project stated to Clif Groh's office, they expect to meet a substantial portion of Railbelt energy. Cameron has a pdf document he can send if people want to learn more and the project representatives have a community engagement person can come present to council if desired.

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

**Sen. Loki Tobin:** Sen. Loki acknowledged all the significant matters touched upon by other representatives earlier in the meeting. Loki stated tomorrow, January 19, 2024, there is a lunch and learn about "yes and" approach to education public policy. It will be streamed on akl.tv and is an awesome opportunity to learn about using bi-partisan collations to build better education legislation and how to focus investment on building better public education infrastructure in the state of Alaska.

On Monday, January 22, 2024, Loki's office will be hearing from educators on the Alaska Reads Act. Loki stated we know it is not going well and we know as parents have a role in their children's education so does the state department of education, school districts, and local school boards.

There has been a lot of conversation about the bill being presented in House Rules Committee on Saturday, January 20, 2024. Loki's most recent newsletter provides a detailed analysis on what is in the Bill. Loki stated there are things in the Bill that Loki's office really needs to put some eyes and attention on and hoped that members of the council will read the newsletter and give their voice to what needs to be an increase in public school funding and good sound public policy that has been well vetted by committees.

Loki finally got her Department of Transportation (DOT) bill back. Loki's office is working with the DOT for a couple of tweaks on it. Loki is excited to have it introduced as it will help get out of the system of defining big projects that have 20-40 year horizons and get off those projects that won't help the betterment of our community. It will start put 5int resources towards transportation access, improving sidewalks, improving multi-modal transportation corridors, and making sure Alaskan's can thrive in safe and secure environment.

If you have your Club 49 email, constituent fares are back, come visit Loki's office in Juneau, it will be a great time.

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

### **FCC Report**

**Ron Meehan:** Bob Reupke was not able to attend the FCC meeting this month. Ron expressed gratitude for everything that Bob does. Pamela Raygor was able to attend the FCC meeting.

**Pamela Raygor:** The mayor's office expressed joy in getting out a mayor's minutes newsletter, which is weekly. The mayor's priority is energy, year-round, and homeless shelters.

The mayor's office also made aware the non-profit grant application process is open between Jan 15 and 26.

The Assembly chair, Christopher Constance, said there was a special assembly meeting on January 16<sup>th</sup> and another special meeting will be taking place soon. Christopher really wanted everyone to get involved with ballot trackers so people were confident in their ballot being submitted and counted.

Marco Bellamy, School Board President, spoke highly about the overview report she hopes to get out to the public and community councils to reduce communication lag. There are reductions discussed from the Jan 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, classroom pull out for gifted students, cut in advanced enrichment summer programs, and a temporary freeze on all vacant positions. The school board negotiated 1 year renewal of all teachers contract by a vote for the 2024-2025 school year. February 6<sup>th</sup> is the next school board meeting and is focused on the budget.

Legislative presentation was made by Rep. Mears and Sen. Kaufman, which discussed the Anchorage Caucus and working across party lines to effectively represent and address Anchorage needs. There was a legislative meeting with the Assembly and the school board. It mostly focused on the school board funding the BSA. There is going to be an anchorage legislator meeting on March 9<sup>th</sup>, from 2-4pm, at the UAA cuddy center.

The legislative program for 2024 was presented by assembly member, Anna Brawley, and the mayor's office, Krista. The report is available online there are major topics, but not all inclusive. It is focused on energy, education, and DOT. Sen. Kaufman stated he will have hearing on the snow removal and try to figure out the overlapping issue with state and municipal government in the anchorage bowl. State priorities are the primary focus of the program, and they overlap with the municipal league priorities.

A job posting description for a new executive officer has gone out and they would like to have it filled in the next three weeks. The FCCs budget has been increased from 90,000 to 200,000 which will allow for the executive director and possibly other staff, and training and guidance for councils. The publication for the executive position went out today. The councils are encouraged to help fill that out.

**Stu Grenier:** Were you able to talk about the ranked choice presentation?

**Pamela Raygor:** There was limited time and I was not able to share that.

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

**Steve Farris:** In the cul-de-sac on 19<sup>th</sup> Circle there is 10ft high snow berm and the street is down to one lane. Steve has a (Chevrolet) HHR that will barely fit through the cul-de-sac. An 80yr old lives in the cul-de-sac and Steve is concerned emergency personnel would not be able to fit through. Steve requested front loaders to remove the snow.

**Stu Grenier:** Shared a photo of Bob Reupke and gave appreciation for who he is and all he has done for the community. Stu also commented on new life insurance policies excluding weapons of mass destruction from coverage in the policy.

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

**George Martinez:** Expressed gratitude to be with the community council. George will be representing for the assembly today. Assembly Member Bronga is at the Airport Heights council meeting.

The new 51 bus route is commissioned this week going into Muldoon and Centennial Park/Centennial Village. We should also be hearing about a transit hub in our community and putting out an RFP for a transit center on DeBarr and Muldoon. There have been some mixed used proposals for a few different locations in that area.

The assembly along with administration has advanced an increase in the wages for the APD, some have commented this is the largest increase they have seen in a single year. The focus is on recruitment and retention. When there is full staffing you can see what the municipality is able to do.

**Steve Farris:** Expressed that streets are still not cleared

**George Martinez:** Stated he will try to find out about clearing cul-de-sacs as best he can. Nunaka Valley will be hauled starting tomorrow, January 19, 2024. Widening had not happened in that area yet.

There is \$2.5M of park bonds on the upcoming ballot. The \$2.5M is composed of matching funds for Russian Jack Park and funds toward North Nunaka Valley Park, among other parks. George reminded the council that your voice does matter in prioritizing projects.

"Anchorage Goes" will be on the upcoming ballot as well for your analysis and vote. The ballot measure is on there as more money was wanted to be spent than the Assembly initially approved.

Assembly Member, Kevin Cross is leaving the assembly.

The Assembly voted down marijuana drive throughs and will be taking up looking at how the State is addressing marijuana byproducts and the marketing of that to make sure it's not targeted at children.

**Daniel Volland:** Presented on an upcoming ballot measure for Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and whether that should require assembly confirmation. Part 1 of Daniel's action was to add, in code, qualifications for the CMO. Prior there was no qualification. The CMO must now have a MD or DO degree, completion of

accredited residency, and active license to practice medicine in Alaska. Phase 2 will go before voters to require confirmation of the assembly for the CMO. The role would be more like Chief of Police or Chief of Fire Department which are also confirmed.

Daniel discussed the public safety and transit improvement bond. The traffic calming program has a \$500,000 annual budget. That amount has not been increased since 2016. Daniel and other assembly members are proposing a substitute version of the bond that increases the calming program to increase the traffic department's calming budget to \$1M (\$500,000 increase). Duben Ave., E 4<sup>th</sup>, and Augustine Drive are in the Northeast council boundary and the increase will help address traffic calming needs on those streets.

**Stu Grenier:** Centennial Village has tribal buses. Does the new People Mover bus route include considerations for the native tribal bus riders?

**George Martinez:** We do not know all the considerations People Mover uses. People Mover uses ridership estimates to increase routes.

**Ken Broom:** Does the qualifications for new Chief Medical Officer include qualifications in public health?

**Daniel Volland:** Responded that he reached out to public healthcare providers, and the answer was, not necessarily. There was mixed feedback on that and whether the Chief Medical Officer be board certified. Daniel considered arguments for and against but decided not to add it to the list of qualifications.

**Stephanie Taylor:** Is the Anchorage Goes bond tied to anything else?

**George Martinez:** No

Discussion was held regarding the 500 feet from play area and park boundary from the proposed Balthazar Marijuana Shop

**Ron Meehan:** Advanced the discussion of Homelessness in East Anchorage on the NECC agenda to this time.

**Stu Grenier:** Presented a picture of a tent camp near Centennial Park and the camp has been reported over and over at #ANCWorks!. Stu asked how can we help and how can we get these camps get off our trails?

**George Martinez:** Alexis Johnson is focusing a lot of work right now for the setting up spring and summertime sheltering. There are outreach teams. However, George wanted to talk afterward and see what we can do to get people off the parks. The big picture is there is a housing shortage. Higher housing insecurity is leading to these increases at an individual level and in the aggregate. The assembly appropriated \$1.5M to support Anchorage's 'Next Step' initiative and focus is to house 150 people by April who are currently in the Solid Waste Services building (Emergency Cold Weather Shelter).

**Daniel Volland:** The 'Next Step' initiative works with private landlords to house folks. There is money being set aside also to do mobile dwelling/unit shelter for sanctioned camps with controlled camping and support. There is federal law that is going to the supreme court that may open up options for interventions for illegal camps. Daniel is working on how our community can have more realistic expectations for camps within the law and there is some consensus between assembly and administration that there are parameters we can set. We need to address the issue of capacity so that it is no longer an option to camp on parks and trails.

**George Martinez:** We want to get creative with alternative transitional housing and are working with the municipality, faith-based organizations, and others on ideas.

**Pamela Raygor:** Homeless appear to be drinking and participating in drug use near the Alaska USA (Global Credit Union) near DeBarr. Pamela would like to see that camp broken up as it is unsafe for children and others to walk through. Pamela requested from George Martinez where the \$1.5M for Anchorage's 'Next Step' initiative was found.

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

**Michelle Hodel, Constituent Relations Director for Mayor Bronson:** After two years of discussion the Port of Alaska was renamed in honor of Don Young and affixing his name to the Port. Home and building assessed values are up by 9% this year and signals continued strong demand for housing in the municipality while continued demand for affordable housing remains. The increase in property values are

not tax amounts, mill rates are set in the spring and more information can be found out about the municipality website.

The administration provides grants to qualified non-profits to focus on economic opportunity, workforce development, education, and public safety. The mayor's art's grants program that fosters development of local talent and brings the community together. The application process is open until January 26, 2024.

The assembly and mayor work on items together on legislative priority to take to the state. Cook Inlet Gas is a higher priority for the mayor and is the #2 priority for the mayor. The assembly and the mayor agree Don Young Port is the #1 authority and they do not want a statewide port authority, which is a bill introduced in the Senate. Housing and homelessness remains a top priority for the mayor and assembly and both are working together for a request to the legislature

The mayor will be traveling to Juneau next week to speak with the Anchorage Caucus and appreciates the community council priorities which gives direction in capital project priorities to the legislature.

The Supreme court decided to take up an amicus brief that will potentially allow the municipality to address homeless issues.

**Jim Curran, Muldoon Public Library:** Bingo cards are here for annual winter reading. It is our favorite contest during the year and you can pick up a card tonight.

**Dora Wilson, School Board:** Expressed thanks to Sen. Tobin and Sen. Wielechowski and Rep. Mears for their continued advocacy for education and education funding. There are several board members and students heading to Juneau to talk to legislatures.

Dora is working on the FY25 budget. Over the next few months meetings will be held to develop a balanced budget which may include elimination of Ignite, increasing teacher student ratio, and other actions to cut the \$98M deficit.

The 2024 ballot will have the school education bond and will include funds for roof replacement and other structural improvements to Alpenglow elementary, Central middle school, Chugiak high school, complete construction for Inlet elementary, security improvements across the district, renovation plans for Romig middle school, and other broader planning and design projects.

On February 6<sup>th</sup> the Academies of Anchorage will get feedback from the district and other stakeholders. ASD is still working on what academies are in the high school and possibly 2-4 pathways will exist at the high schools. The next board meeting is Jan 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**David Chrystal, Creekside Park Elementary Principal:** Named principals of the Bartlett area principal group. David provided numerous statistics of demographics of the Bartlett area including that 4,207 students are currently served in the area, 25% of students speak English as a second language, 76% of students are considered economically disadvantaged and all schools within the Northeast Community Council area are in the Title I program.

The top three most diverse public high schools in America are located in Anchorage. Last summer a documentary named *True Colors* was made about two Bartlett high school students and what the students go through. January 18<sup>th</sup> Creekside Park Elementary had a family breakfast promoting good attendance and David thanked Krispy Kreme for donating donuts for it .

There are a combined 33 staff openings. Typically there would be 1-2 per school. If anyone is interested in working in the schools we would love to have people apply.

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

**Lyn Franks, Chair of CIP Committee:** This Saturday, January 20th, 10am at Starbucks (7820 Debarr) there will be a CIP meeting. We have been putting projects in order of importance to the community and if you want to have a say please show up to the meeting.

**Ron Meehan:** If you are not able to make a CIP meeting please email Lyn Franks or Ron Meehan to make sure the community's priorities are captured at [northeastcommunitycouncil@gmail.com](mailto:northeastcommunitycouncil@gmail.com) or [lynxp1@msn.com](mailto:lynxp1@msn.com).

**Stu Grenier, Chair of Parks & Trails and Dog Park Committees:** Volunteers are doing everything to clear the Centennial Park and we need some grooming. Parks and Rec doesn't have the resources to groom. There is a trail along the Tudor/Muldoon curve that connects the Tudor trail to Chugach Foothills

neighborhood. There will be a resolution coming out next month to get the trail to come around the Tudor/Muldoon corner and tie into an underpass under ship creek bridge.

**Steve Johnson, Chair of Alcohol & Marijuana Committee:** There is a rebranding of a bar in Muldoon into a dance hall. There have been massive changes in alcohol licensing to appease breweries, bars, and other parties. Everyone who is involved is very happy with how the new regulations are working and there are several different license types based on what is happening. Refer to online articles for detailed information. There are new regulations on how a Keg is identified so as to know where it came from.

### **Presentations**

No presentations this month.

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

#### **[Muni Ranked Choice Voting Resolution](#)**

Stu Grenier read the proposed resolution.

**Marc Grober:** Did you intend this to be a municipal ordinance? Do you have a suggestion as to how the ordinance should be amended?

**Stephanie Taylor:** Stated Alaska has some of the lowest voter turnout this past election. Ranked Choice voting disenfranchises voters. We have confusion in the municipality with this and mail in voting.

**Marc Grober:** Expressed dissatisfaction at members of the GOP.

There was continued discussion among council members around the Muni Ranked Choice Voting Resolution, expressing both for and against ranked choice voting.

**Stephanie Taylor motioned to continue the discussion on Muni Ranked Choice Voting Resolution indefinitely. Marc Grober seconded. Motion passed by simple majority.**

**Lyn Franks motioned to table vote on the resolution to next month. Murray Crookes seconded.**

**For: 19 Opposed: 5 Abstain: 2. Motion passed to table vote on the Muni Ranked Choice Voting Resolution to next month.**

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

#### **Nunaka Dr Traffic Calming Project**

##### **[Support for Nunaka Valley Traffic Calming Resolution](#)**

**Zak Hartman, MOA Traffic Engineering Department:** Nunaka is one of the highest priority streets for traffic calming. The department is proposing installing mini traffic circles. Mini traffic circles require vehicles to slow down to go around the mini traffic circles. In 2015 temporary mini traffic circles were installed. There were meaningful decreases in speeds in some areas, up to 6 mph decrease, and there were other areas where speeds remained about the same. The traffic department therefore found the installation of mini traffic circles to be effective and excited about this project and open to questions and suggestions.

**Marc Grober:** Are you aware this idea of a traffic circle has already been banned once? Are you aware no one has provided a daily analysis of stress and volume before and after? Are you aware this was only tested in the summer and this could not possibly work during the winter? Are you aware we have proposed five other solutions to the traffic department that wouldn't cause a problem for larger vehicles in the neighborhood?

**Zak Hartman:** There is history of the council area's thoughts on traffic circles and in 2014 Sen. Wielechowski brought a grant to Nunaka and the council decided to install sidewalks on Stirling instead of traffic circles in Nunaka. In 2017 a straw poll was taken by those on Nunaka drive and the straw poll was 2 in favor, 4 against, 1 abstain, 1 preferred speed humps. Zak was happy to share the raw data from the 2015 mini traffic circles with Marc Grober. The mini traffic circles are designed so graders can get around them and other larger vehicles. There is an apron that can be driven over and an inner circle cannot be driven over, it has landscaping or signs within the inner circle.

**Ron Meehan:** We did also receive concerns from Susan Williams regarding about traffic circles in the winter. She wrote the following: Traffic department so often does not check traffic issues in the winter. The roads are such a mess right now. A traffic circle would just make it worse.

**Zak Hartman:** Offered to show a picture that graders can get around the traffic circles in the winter.

**Marc Grober motioned for a resolution of the council opposing a roundabout or traffic circle and that the traffic department examine the half dozen other possibilities to reduce speed in roads in Nunaka Valley and come back to the council with an analysis of the other options to so the council can further consider the best way to slow traffic in the neighborhood. Motion was seconded by Ron Meehan.**

There were several amendments proposed by council members that included studying the Nunaka Valley traffic calming during the winter, the six other traffic calming devices, and that the other six options include information on pedestrian and bicycle access.

**George Martinez:** Is there a time limit on moving this project forward?

**Zack Hartman:** There is not a serious time frame. This project is the highest priority for the department and would be planned for construction by 2025.

**Pamela Raygor:** Requested the resolution to be available in writing before a council meeting.

**Ted Eischeid:** Stated at E 6<sup>th</sup> between Pine and Bragaw, two mini traffic circles were installed and they have slowed him down. He doesn't see issues with winter maintenance.

Discussion held regarding the traffic circle opposition motion on the table.

**Marc Grober & Zak Hartman tabled both their sponsored motions till next month's council meeting so there would be resolutions available in writing.**

### **[Eklutna River Restoration Project](#)**

**Ron Meehan tabled the Eklutna River Restoration Project until next month.**

### **Community Announcements**

**Stephanie Taylor:** The manager of Fred Meyer told Stefanie Taylor's husband there is more lost to theft than Fred Meyer is selling everyday. Stefanie expressed if it continues down this course, they will shut Fred Meyer down.

**Selina Metoyer:** The Spirit of Muldoon Picnic will be on June 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Ron Meehan:** Stated the council is looking for a chair of the picnic committee for the Spirit of Muldoon Picnic and encouraged council members to volunteer.

**Ron Meehan adjourns meeting at 9:03PM**

**Upcoming NECC meetings: February 15th, 2024**

**Respectively submitted by,**

**David Weber, Volunteer Interim Secretary**