

RUSSIAN JACK COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

6:30 PM, Wednesday, March 13, 2024

At Zion Lutheran Church – 2100 Boniface Parkway

Present: Ed Leach, Lori Pickett, Lindsey Hadjuk, Michele Cateson, Kevin Hall, Dan & Sherry Wright

Present via ZOOM: Kendra Kloster, Mercedes Colbert, Stanley Wright, Genevieve Mina, Bridget Jochum, Harry Caldwell, Deirdre Goins, Katy Giorgio, Ted Eischeid, Carl Jacobs, Beth Nordlund, Arielle, Pat Higgins

Meeting was called to order at 6:32 pm by President Kendra Kloster and the meeting then was run 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) Mercedes Colbert provided the report – Kathleen Plunkett was in the Juneau office today. Moment with DOT Commissioner regarding snow plowing in Anchorage had broad disagreement on how 'well' it was going. Council on Domestic Violence \$4 million funding cut – looking for resources. Agreement on a budget schedule with April 12 target for House and Capital budget passing date. Little break during Easter, but will still be working. Senator Wielechowski's constituent survey:

<https://aksenatemajority.surveyparrow.com/s/Sen-Wielechowski-Session-Survey-24/tt-9MXJKANDoF8Au5rsQXc4M9?fbclid=IwAR0iKsHkTor2ePbIpfHtOow7P32f77PAk6MoiYuoDTUDE7WnWCu9GPanLho>

SB 151 murder/missing indigenous women bill – moving forward in committee with a hearing tomorrow.

Sen. Forrest Dunbar – (Seat J) Arielle provided a report on the Executive Orders. His report is attached in Meeting Documents. Ted watched Joint Session and sad to see Recreation Rivers Advisory Board failed by one vote. This will be taken over by Department of Natural Resources. Governor said this is for efficiency. Ted stated that local perspective is often clearer than the bureaucrats view. Child Care at home facilities has not had a hearing yet, but is scheduled for public testimony next Tuesday.

Rep. Genevieve Mina – Seat 19 – SB 140 deadline 11:59 tomorrow (if there is a veto). A veto override would require a 2/3 majority. Thanks for all that came and supported education funding. Update on her committees H&SS – Assisted Living help for those that don't qualify for Medicaid services. Transportation amendments related to snow removal vacancies (equipment operators and mechanics). Mission critical pay increase of 30%, which is difficult with union and government coordination factors. New STIP was submitted by DOT, waiting on local and state funding sources and their compatibility with federal funding requirements. HB 325 – small businesses, HB 340 – waiver on ID, HB 355 – DOT statewide transit plan. SNAP bill has been referred. Constituent Survey: <http://bit.ly/3Jq28xQ>

House finance going through budget cut of 20% domestic violence and sexual assault funding which is a huge Alaskan issue. These programs need support.

RE: DOT Shortage of operators and mechanics – Anchorage/Mat Valley graduate 5000 students each year and could provide 100 people to be trained. Vocational/Tech opportunities are out there.

Crisis of staffing of state employees overall. DRB has not been processing new retirees, due to staffing issues. SB88 passed and if Alaska is going to compete with Lower 48, we need to have the benefits that will both attract and retain employees.

Thanks for helping those losing broadband in the near future. Affordable broadband program is not being subsidized.

Rep. Stanley Wright – Seat 22 - Working on education funding SB 140, Amendment 27 increased funding for education on BSA \$680, which also includes transportation, created charter school coordinator, correspondence, added another \$500 per child with a deficiency in reading. QUESTION regarding if this will be vetoed? Not 100% sure how the Governor feels about it.

Rep. Andrew Gray - Seat 20 - Deirdre Goins said they will have a constituent meeting tomorrow. HB 298 – alcohol beverage and cancer act (adds a warning label). HB 363 regarding foster children placed in psychiatric institutions to get a timely hearing. HB 228 – Division of Elections to provide results in a timely manner.

3. Assembly report (3 minutes each)

Christopher Constant Seat 1B – no report

Daniel Volland Seat 1L – no report

Karen Bronga Seat 5H - CIP lists due between April 1 and mid-June. Tuesday looking at short term rentals – vote held off till March 19. Quiet enjoyment of neighborhoods concern that short term regulations should also be considered for long term rentals. E-collar on dogs will be considered compliant with current leash law (voting on March 19 on this). Right on red in downtown district (walking safe corridor). Ed supports enforcement of jay walking (but the Assembly legalized it already). Mayor ordinance AO 2024-26 limit homeless camps to 50 tents. No camping in downtown area at all and have to be 10 blocks from a homeless shelter. 500 feet from trails, playgrounds, playing fields. Rangeview trailer park off Muldoon may be an area to consider. Sherry Wright stated that people need a place to live with toilets, showers and dumpsters, because our park is becoming a garbage dump by homeless who are not taking care of where they live. There were full shopping carts strewn about with garbage all along some of the trails last summer. That can't continue.

George Martinez Seat 5I – no report

4. School board report (3 minutes each) – Carl Jacobs finalized operating budget starting July 1. 93% of legislators voted in support of education funding. Amendment to the budget to allow the district to add positions, restore night programs, STE for language immersion, restore holdback teacher positions, which passed and their operating budget has been sent to the Assembly, then

Dept of Education will review. Prop 1 School Bond – please review website on scope of that bond. College career and life readiness month. 7 pm tonight KTUU Mayoral Debate.

5. FCC report – Sherry Wright presented information provided by Kathleen Plunkett – They elected Kevin Fimon into the vacant FCC Treasurer position to complete the term through May/June. They expect to complete interviews for the manager position soon and will update us on that next month.

6. Park Grant Discussion (Community Challenge Grant - done every 2 years & Neighborhood Forrest Grant) both due March 20, 2024

There was interest expressed by the East High coach about improving tread width around the south RJSP ski trails that have become overgrown.

Alaska Literacy Project proposed 6 interpretive multi-lingual signage in RJSP for the Community Challenge Grant. The QR code could be added that will connect people to a website they could hear. They created a letter requesting support, which Lori read. Ed moved to support the letter. Lindsay Hadjuk 2nd. Motion carried unanimously to support the project.

Ted spoke about the leash free dog section of RJP-NU there is a section of trail that is often flooded. I've thought of the grant, but the 1:1 match is problematic. The current solution is simply to put logs across. I jump it when I run and usually get wet feet. It's not a long section, but soggy during spring breakup and during higher rain events. Interested in diversity of the trees. Sherry Wright added interest in getting improvements (as in fencing and access) to the dog park and Lindsey said that has been included in the RJSP Master Plan. There are also flooded areas on the ski trails in the North part of the park, primarily in the Spring. Either gravel or wood chips might help.

Russian Jack food forest – Williwaw Gardens.

Both grants would require community work partnerships. Anchorage Park Foundation hired Allie Merrill who will work on the Forrest Service Grant for the next 5 years.

Basketball court by Williwaw resurfacing

Some of these items may need to go on the CIP lists.

Beth Nordlund spoke about the Park Bond 4 - \$600,000 for Russian Jack Springs Park. 1.5 million needs local match for federal funding that would create a boardwalk to connect Tony Knowles Coastal Trail to Ship Creek Trail. YEP applications due March 17. Applications through Anchorage Parks & Rec.

7. Park Clean up – May 18 tentative date 10 am to 2 pm. Beth will coordinate with Parks & Rec for the bags and pick up. Kendra will reach out to our representatives and senators on providing pizza.

8. Neighborhood/Community Announcements - Kevin Hall, Pres 3 Barons Renaissance Fair – after 20 years taking an interim RJSP north 1st 2 weekends in June (starting May 18 with set up).

June 1-2, 8-9 with moveout on June 11. Kevin promised there would be cleanup once they are done and the land will be restored of any damage. Workshops are happening on April 20 and they are taking applications for actors. Kevin can be reached at 907-229-6328.
<https://3barons.org/> is website.

Brown Jug is up for a license renewal. Harry Caldwell is the area manager. Sherry Wright made a motion to support the alcohol license renewal for Brown Jug on Bragaw. Ed Leach 2nd. 3 in favor – 2 oppose – 2 abstain. Motion carried. We had some discussion as to the process of putting these on the agenda. It was sent out in an email from the MOA for our notice.

(Items from meeting chat room) APM School Board and Mayoral candidate survey:
<https://alaskapublic.org/news/anchorage-2024-election-candidates/#/>

Pat Hayward (via Kendra) - Would you please announce a mayoral candidate forum? The non-partial forum is sponsored by AFACT--Anchorage Faith in Action Congregations Together, a faith-based community organizing group. All candidates have agreed to participate, and they'll be asked questions regarding issues important to the participating member groups. It will take place Monday, March 18 at First Covenant Church (1145 C Street) from 7-8 pm followed by a meet and greet.

Next meeting is scheduled for April 10th at 6:30 pm. Meeting adjourned at 8:33 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:
Sherry Wright, Secretary