

Rogers Park Community Council Minutes
7PM Monday, May 12 2008
Rogers Park Elementary School Library

Board Members Attending

Jim Wright, President
Heather Ireland, Past President
Ted Ryberg, Treasurer
Heather Rice, Secretary
Bob Churchill, FCC Representative

Minutes

I. Welcome

Jim Wright called the meeting to order just after 7 PM.

II. Approval of Minutes

Bob Churchill made the first motion to accept the April 14, 2008, minutes and Marilyn Houser seconded the motion. There was no opposition and the minutes were approved.

III. Anchorage Fire Department

No AFD representative attended the meeting; therefore, no report was provided.

IV. Assembly Report

Dan Coffey was not present.

Elvi Gray-Jackson was present and provided the following information:

- This is Elvi Gray Jackson's first official community council meeting since being elected. She reiterated her campaign promise to represent our interests, listen, and work together to come to consensus on issues benefitting the community as a whole.

- The Assembly considered two recycling proposals at their May 6, 2008, meeting. The first proposal (Ordinance No. AO 2008-52), which the Assembly passed, initiates a new curbside recycling program and Pay-As-You-Throw trash collection system for about 30% of the city's Solid Waste Services customers. The Pay-As-You-Throw system sets different garbage collection fees based on how much households throw away (as opposed to recycle). The second proposal (Ordinance No. AO 2008-62S), would have raised landfill fees to pay for other city-wide recycling efforts; however, the Assembly voted 7-4 to delay that proposal until August (source: Anchorage Daily News). Ms. Gray-Jackson voted to accept the proposal, believing that even if all the information isn't available, you "have to start somewhere." Another Assembly member, Patrick Flynn, put in a notice for an earlier reconsideration of the proposal and Assemblyman Harry Drummond seconded the motion; thus, the proposal will be before the Assembly again on May 20, 2008.

- Another big issue being addressed by the Assembly is the Title 21 rewrite. One specific concern on the west side of Anchorage is the proposed airport district.

- Ms. Gray-Jackson gave out her business cards with her contact information on one side and frequently called government numbers on the other side. numbers.

Rich Gingras asked Ms. Gray-Jackson the cost of the new system and whether the City would cover the costs of the new garbage cans for SWS customers. Ms. Gray-Jackson noted that new garbage collection fees will be based on how much a household throws away; as for costs of the entire recycling program she referred Mr. Gingras to the Muni website for that information. SWS will pay the costs of the new garbage cans for customers.

Heather Ireland asked Ms. Gray-Jackson about noise concerns related to Moose's Tooth summer concert series. At this point, the Moose's Tooth hasn't requested a permit, though the concert schedule shows two concerts coming up. If they receive a permit and violate the noise limits, they'd be fined about \$25. However, violations won't be addressed unless neighbors call the City to complain about the noise from the concerts. (Jim Wright will email the community council with additional information.) Bob Williams, Marilyn Houser, and Diana Evans also stated that this is an issue of concern for them. Heather suggested working with the Moose's Tooth now, to proactively address the issue before it occurs. Or she suggests raising the fine so it has more of an impact. Diana Evans noted that we could talk with one of the owners of Moose's Tooth, Matt Jones, who lives in the Rogers Park neighborhood. Ms. Gray-Jackson said she would look into these options.

V. Legislative Reports

Senator Johnny Ellis and Representative Berta Gardner gave presentations about recent State Legislature actions. A staff member for Representative Les Gara also was at the meeting, as was Senator Bettye Davis staff member Don Burrell.

Johnny Ellis:

- This was most accomplished Legislative session in the last two decades. The bipartisan group accomplished a lot – they went on a "savings spree" instead of a spending spree and put away \$5 billion for lean times.
- They passed legislation providing increases and improvements for education, the public employee and teachers retirement system, and Municipal Assistance.
- Several capital budget items that benefit the Rogers Park Community Council were passed: \$1.5 million for the Northern Lights Sound Barrier; \$160,000 for Rogers Park Community Council traffic control and pedestrian safety; \$70,000 for retrofitting the Rogers Park Elementary multipurpose room; \$2.5 million for a commission on post-secondary education for needs-based financial aid; \$46 million to fully fund the University of Alaska-Anchorage health and sciences building.
- The above capital budget items have been forwarded to the Governor for her approval. She must approve or veto by May 23. If items are veto-ed the Legislature has the option of overriding the veto within five days of convening the special session.
- Senate Bill 185 requiring convicted sex offenders to register their email addresses, instant message addresses, and any other internet communication identifiers with the Alaska Department of Public Safety. Also passed was House Bill 65 protecting against identity theft.
- The Purple Heart Trail designation has officially been applied to the Alaska Highway and part of the Richardson Highways as a way of honoring our military servicemen and women who have been wounded in combat.

Berta Gardner:

- For the first time, the Legislature passed a three year funding plan for schools and a three year municipal revenue plan.
- They elevated the education debate by making the Education Committee a standing committee.
- The University of Alaska-Anchorage was given funding for six new core instructors, which will benefit students.
- The legislature provided that the Governor has to have a 10-year plan when she delivers her budget to the Legislature, and she must identify funding sources, as well.
- ACES and AGEA are considered two big wins.

- Two disappointments were the inability to increase funds for the Denali Kid Care S-CHP program and the inability to prevent mandatory overtime for nurses.
- A special session on June 3 is planned and there may be another special session in August to address energy issues.

Heather Ireland asked whether a 90-day session truly saves money if issues just end up being bumped to special sessions. Senator Ellis responded that there would be special sessions regardless. Representative Gardner noted that even though fewer bills passed, more bills doesn't mean better government. Senator Ellis, however, also noted that a 90-day session does mean lobbyists are more powerful, the Executive Branch is more powerful, there are more off-session committee meetings, and overall it's less of a citizen's Legislature and more of a professional Legislature.

Donny _____, Senator Davis' staff person, stated that the Senator will be holding some public hearings in August or September to address educational issues, including hearings on the drop-out issue, formulating a preschool-college (P-16) council, and possibly the truancy issue.

Bob Williams asked about clean elections. Senator Ellis is a co-sponsor of a clean elections bill and Representative Gardner also is a champion of this bill. Though there were two hearings on the bill in the House, it never moved from committee. Senator Ellis stated that he didn't believe the Legislature would ever pass the bill; instead it will be up to voters to put an initiative on the ballot.

VI. FCC Update

Bob Churchill gave the update:

- The FCC elected a new treasurer.
- The focus of the recent meeting was on moving into the new Fireweed Avenue facility (the old United Way building near Spenard).
- Draft financial policies also were handed out at the meeting.
- Some ancillary clerical help was approved to help the FCC stay accessible during the summer.
- The FCC is looking at bringing the Neighborhoods US Conference to Anchorage in 2010 (they'll find out if they got the bid this summer).
- There's no meeting this month.

VII. Treasurer's Report

Ted Ryberg, RPCC Treasurer, noted that the balance for May is the same as for April: \$163.20.

VIII. Fireweed and LaTouche Traffic Calming/Road Upgrade

Brad Melocik, DOWL Engineers, gave a brief presentation:

- There's a public meeting for the Cottonwood and Locarno Drive safety improvement project this Wednesday, May 14, 2008.
- The Fireweed and LaTouche project will be completed by July 15, 2008. Work that will be completed between now and then includes: all landscaping; putting a 2-inch asphalt finish course on Fireweed; completing the Fireweed sidewalk (southside) and bike path (northside); changing the traffic pattern at LaTouche and Northern Lights (median added; right turn only lane identified); finishing the road work, pathways, and landscaping on LaTouche; adding Rogers Park signs in the medians at New Seward and Northern Lights intersections.
- The Parks and Recreation Department is aware that repairs to the Juneau-Chester Creek storm drain caused damage to the playing fields. The fields will be closed this summer and possibly next summer in order to grade and re-seed.
- Originally, plans called for a concrete sidewalk on the west side of Juneau, connecting to the Chester Creek trail. Residents living on that section of Juneau, however, asked that the sidewalk not be constructed and after some discussion, the City agreed not to build it. (Note: This issue and resolution was never discussed with the Rogers Park Community Council; it was a decision moved forward solely by Juneau Street residents.)

Cheryl Forrest asked whether the area cleared on Fireweed and New Seward would be re-landscaped once work is done. The clearing has taken away the sound barrier and it's now very noisy for nearby houses. Brad didn't know the answer to this question. Cheryl suggested at least seeding the disturbed area and Brad noted that that's very likely. Representative Gardner added as an aside that perhaps the money that was to be spent on the Juneau sidewalk could be used to landscape the cleared area.

IX. Russian Jack Springs Winter and Summer Improvements

Dwayne Adams, Land Design North and Wendy Wiltfong, with First Tee, gave a presentation:

- LDN has been hired to do the facilitation for this project, but that's all.
- 1997 is the most recent rendition of the Russian Jack Springs master plan; it provided for additional parking, soccer fields, softball fields, a maintenance yard, and a rerouted roadway. It was ratified by the Planning and Zoning Commission in 2002.
- The 2004 Parks Greenbelt and Open Space Plan pretty much carried forward the 1997 Russian Jack Springs master plan. It called for shared use agreements to remove some financial burdens for parks from the City. It also called for renovated and upgraded greens to encourage more golfing.
- The 2006 ballot proposition allowed for the City to enter into an agreement with First Tee to have 250 hours/year limited use, provide a learning center (undefined) and to facilitate a First Tee program. No public money was to be involved. Also in 2006, a \$3.995 million bond was passed to make improvements in parks, including \$250,000 designated for improvements to Russian Jack Springs (again undefined).
- Since that time, First Tee has secured money to do planning and has put together a proposed plan for improvement of the Russian Jack Springs golf course. The first plan was ambitious – 40 acres of clearing involved. The Parks and Recreation Commission asked for a less ambitious plan, with a minimal level course so First Tee came up with a new plan for 23 acres of clearing and 1.5 acres partial clearing. This plan was presented to the public January 10, 2008, and generated a lot of negative comment.
- Now First Tee has revised the plan again, so the clearing totals 7.5 acres (though this is partly because some of the master plan improvements such as the maintenance field and rerouted roadway have been postponed, though not definitively eliminated).
- Wednesday, May 21, 2008, is a public meeting at the Russian Jack Chalet from 6:30pm to 9:30pm. Based on comments at this meeting, First Tee will put forward a revised plan in September or October of this year.
- This summer, they'll be conducting tests on one of the natural turf greens to measure runoff and determine pollution threats.

Rich Gingras noted that the Rogers Park Community Council put out a resolution against this project.

Dave Evans asked several questions – Can First Tee do without a driving range? Are there any alternatives to a large driving range? Will an 80-foot tall fence enclose the driving range? Why not use the Russian Jack Elementary school for the range? Or the black spruce part of the park? Wendy Wiltfong, Dwayne Adams, and Rod Jackson (Vice President First Tee Board of Directors) responded to these questions:

- Part of First Tee's business plan is to generate funds for a program to offer scholarships for kids. Kids and adults paying to use the driving range is a key component needed to fund the program.
- A 20 or 30 yard range won't attract avid golfers (need a minimum of 150 yards).
- The new range will reuse some of the equipment from the Klatt driving range when it's closed (in about a year).
- The fence likely will be no more than 40-50 feet high.
- No other options for location of the driving range are being considered right now. Entering into an agreement with the school district is too much of a leap for the Parks and Recreation Department at the moment.
- Black spruce part of park is a class C wetland (though it's a developable wetland).

Heather Ireland asked whether the City would get any of the income from the driving range. Wendy didn't know the answer, though Rod Jackson thought that would probably be the case.

Marilyn Houser asked about the fence. Dwayne Adams responded that the fence is netting, supported on poles about 40 feet apart (probably). They will be looking into the issue of the net being a hazard to birds. Normally nets are taken down every winter.

Marilyn Houser asked how long the golfing season is in Alaska. Rod Jackson responded that it can last from early April through September, though normally the main season wraps up when school begins.

Bob Williams suggested perhaps giving a break on fees to Anchorage residents to use course.

David Sipos asked whether using public lands for golfing is the best idea for our town, especially given the latitude. Dwayne Adams responded that lots of public lands are used for golfing nationwide. He stated that O'Malley does about 32,000 rounds a year and a good course in Florida does about the same. Extended daylight hours in Alaska make a big difference.

Heather Ireland asked who's paying for this. Dwayne Adams said the golf course improvements are paid by the City, since it's a municipal asset. The learning center (driving range, pitch and put chipping area – not a building) will be paid by First Tee.

Someone else noted that the underlying tone of discussion seems to be that this project is going forward...is anyone aware of controversy? There's opposition – not to First Tee but to loss of integrity to the park. Already, there's a lack of green space available to people in that part of town for year-round activity like skiing and walking/biking on trails. Heather Ireland stated that the Rogers Park Community Council came out with a resolution in December opposing this project; specifically, they were opposed to clearing 25 acres and to the interior parking lot; also have resolution asking for more public process.

Dwayne Adams noted that the Parks and Recreation Department operating budget is at the level it was in 1985, not even adjusted for inflation. The Department must depend on nonprofits (like First Tee) to run recreation programs. It's a tough trade for the slow erosion of the open spaces we treasure. First Tee believes they're doing something good for recreational use.

Someone asked the cost of construction and annual operations. Wendy Wiltfong said they have construction costs (she didn't have the number) and would be determining operating costs soon.

Diana Evans pointed out that the time to start working with schools is now. This project could be a pilot project. Plus, one of the benefits of First Tee at a school is it would bring traffic to the school during the summer, keeping vandalism down.

Helen Nienhauser asked what the City gets out of this other than an activity for kids (and how much is actually an activity for kids and how much is a driving range?). Dwayne Adams (?) responded that the concept is that a driving range is an asset as a place to do something for kids and adults. And driving ranges provide at least 30% of the program's funding (at least nationally).

Go to www.muni.org to the Parks and Recreation Department website for further information on this project. All comments should be sent via P&R staff, Brad Dunker.

X. Recycling

Sara Ellen Hutchison from the Alaska Center for the Environment gave a presentation on the new recycling program:

- On May 6, the Assembly unanimously passed curbside recycling.
- In Rogers Park Community Council, Woodside East and College Village will be the only Solid Waste Service customers getting curbside recycling initially. Other Solid Waste Services customers won't get curbside recycling until maybe January or next spring. Call SWS if you want to express an opinion about this.
- Though the Assembly isn't taking more public testimony, she encouraged people to show up at the next May 20 Assembly meeting anyway to show support for area-wide recycling, anyway.

Heather Ireland moved that the Rogers Park Community Council ask the Assembly to support areawide initiative AO2008-62S. Her resolution is as follows:

The RPCC requests Assembly pass AO2008-62S to implement areawide recycling at no increase to property taxes.

Cheryl Forrest seconded this motion.

Rich Gingras stated that he prefers the costs for this come out of our taxes. He offered a friendly amendment to remove the "at no increase to property taxes" language from the resolution. Cheryl Forrest seconded this motion. The resolution now reads:

The RPCC requests the Assembly to pass AO2008-62S to implement areawide recycling.

There was a call for questions. Ms. Gray-Jackson made a friendly amendment to add the words, "in its entirety" to the resolution. Cheryl Forrest seconded this motion. The resolution now reads:

RPCC requests Assembly to pass AO2008-62S to implement areawide recycling in its entirety.

Jim Wright asked whether everyone was ready to vote. The answer was yes.

All in favor...18.

Opposed ... 0

Abstaining...2

The resolution passed.

A final note – Evergreen Nursery is now accepting yard waste, including horse manure. Call them for more information at 344 -2588.

XI. CIP Survey

Everyone should already have the CIP survey. Heather Ireland noted that 45 people have completed it so far. She'll send out another reminder. There's also a link on the council website.

XII. Northern Lights Sound Barrier

Note that the \$1.5 million in funding is subject to a Governor's veto.

Workers have started clearing the continuation of the section they're already on which will go to Maplewood.

Minutes submitted by Heather Rice, May 13, 2008.