

Fairview Community Council  
Executive Board Meeting Minutes

January 4, 2007  
Fairview Recreation Center

Meeting started at 7:05 pm.

**Board Members Present:** Darrel Hess (President), Justina Meyer (Vice President), Sharon Chamard (Secretary), Harry Deuber (Treasurer), Dave Brossard (At-Large), Allen Kemplen (At-Large), Noel Rea (At-Large), Lee Ross (At-Large), Benita White (At-Large)

**Other Persons Present:** Paul Benson, Jim Childers, Bob Wright

**Jim Childers and Bob Wright, both from the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, were invited to update the Executive Board on the status of the Fairview Parkway project.**

Allen Kemplen asked them to explain the methodology for acquiring property along the proposed future route (the "alignment") of the roadway, and also what will happen to the properties that are acquired prior to actual construction. Bob Wright explained that the state has allocated \$2 million for advanced right-of-way acquisition. This is not a lot of money considering that the project runs from 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Bragaw. The \$2 million will be used to buy vacant lots, unoccupied houses, and properties that are most likely to be along the alignment. So far, they have bought a vacant lot at 14<sup>th</sup> and Ingra, two houses north of that location, and the Green Connection office building. In addition, they have right-of-first-refusal on the Green Connection warehouse building. These purchases cost \$1 million. The purchasing strategy does not include eminent domain or condemnation; all sales will be negotiated. The primary geographic focus of the acquisitions will be the area between Gambell and Ingra. Space not used for the road could be used for other development, such as pocket parks or bus turnouts. Darrel Hess asked if the community will have input into the use of the space not used for the road. Bob Wright answered yes.

Jim Childers said there are a lot of things that will decide the alignment, not just the location of vacant lots. The DOT&PF will not leave properties vacant; they will be rented out. For multi-family properties that are currently occupied, conceptual discussions are under way with DOT&PF, Robin Ward at the Heritage Land Bank, and Cook Inlet Housing to have Cook Inlet Housing manage the properties. Vacant lots will be fenced and secured. They hope to secure at least \$10 million next year for further property acquisition.

Harry Deuber asked if there would be a mechanism to prevent someone from building something new along the alignment. Jim Childers replied that there is no eminent domain or condemnation process, but everybody, including the municipality, will know about the future road development. Allen Kemplen asked if people would even be able to get construction financing to build along the alignment. Jim Childers said there are out-of-state lenders who wouldn't know about the project, so someone probably could get financing.

Jim Childers explained that there are three parts of the project: 1) the Midtown section, from 36<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Avenues; 2) the Bragaw to 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue alignment connecting to the Hyder corridor; and 3) the Fairview Parkway section. It is a complex project, involving right-of-way issues, bridges, and overpasses. Staging is important. The need to ensure good traffic flow during construction may dictate the feasibility of various options. In the first study phase, alternative routes will also be considered. The goal of this phase is to develop a high level of confidence in the feasibility of different options. At this point though, the current proposed alignment is what is left on the table. There are \$8 million still on the books for this first study phase. Federal rules apply because these funds are from the federal government. The state and the municipality will work cooperatively to raise funds for the project; it will take a partnership of federal, state, and municipal dollars to pull off the project. The federal funds received so far are for the Reconnaissance phase, and will not cover the Environmental Impact Study (EIS) phase. The Reconnaissance phase includes the public impact process and initial engineering to determine the alignment. The public process is very rigorous; "substantial opportunity" for public input must be provided.

Allen Kemplen asked why the state is going through the Reconnaissance phase for this project when it just jumped right to the Environmental Impact phase for the Knik Arm Crossing. Jim Childers said it was because the Knik Arm Toll and Bridge Authority (KABATA) has \$30 million and can afford to conduct an EIS. The \$8 million the Freeway-to-Freeway project has now isn't enough to do an EIS. Both projects are estimated to cost the same to

construct. But there isn't anything bad about going through the Reconnaissance phase, because many things can be done in this phase that are relevant to the EIS phase. He said he doesn't want the project to go backwards; he wants to keep moving ahead. In terms of the timeline, the preliminary engineering process will take about two years, and we could then move seamlessly into the EIS phase. Darrel Hess asked whether the Reconnaissance phase or the EIS phase has more impact on determining the alignment. Jim Childers answered that it the Reconnaissance phase. Darrel Hess then asked if we will have an alignment decided in two years, and if we will then move into the EIS phase. Jim Childers said yes, and that the EIS breaks impacts into two categories; first, it discloses the impacts and second, it presents the pros and cons. However, the EIS does not change the alternatives. One of the key things that will come out of the Reconnaissance phase is a plan for traffic management. For smaller projects, this is left to the contractor to coordinate, but for this project, it will be much more complicated.

Sharon Chamard asked if the issue of the grade of the road has been decided already. Jim Childers said yes, that DOT&PF takes their guidance from local planning documents (such as the Long-Range Transportation Plan), and the "cut-and-cover" is in these documents. But there may be a possibility of an elevated section in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue-Post Road area where there is a steep dip in the road.

Allen Kemplen asked what it will take to move directly to the EIS phase. Jim Childers answered that about \$12 million more is needed. DOT&PF will be hiring a consultant using the \$8 million left for the Reconnaissance phase. It's a big project, actually about the size of 4 or 5 other typical projects. This road is part of the National Highway system. It connects communities, the port, and so on. They are not losing sight of the transportation objective, but they realize it needs to fit in with the needs of the community. It takes about 4 years to complete the EIS phase. This includes the Reconnaissance phase, and assumes a seamless transition from one phase to the other.

Allen Kemplen pointed out that employment is an important aspect of this potential redevelopment, and that economic vitality is one of the chief goals of the Fairview Neighborhood Plan. Redevelopment of the cut-and-covers has to be addressed. Jim Childers replied that the Request for Proposals for consultants speaks to this generally, though more specifics in the contract could include this. Development of the "purpose and need" of the project is important for the consultants to do. Allen Kemplen stated that the contract with the consultants should include elements that are relevant to the Fairview Community Council, and that the things we've clarified with DOT&PF so far should not be lost as we move forward. Jim Childers agreed, and said that the purpose and needs statement will guide the project into the future, even as administrators and people change.

Noel Rea asked if it were possible for the Fairview Community Council to secure more money to do an EIS, could it be done simultaneously with the Reconnaissance phase to expedite things. Jim Childers said yes, that it is really just a matter of funding. Noel Rea then asked if planning for the Fairview Parkway necessarily has to include the Knik Arm Crossing. Jim Childers said the Knik Arm Crossing will be taken into consideration, but it is not necessary to factor it in. He continued to say that the goal of the engineering part is to come up with feasible solutions for dealing with issues like the bank building south of 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and also to come up with an open and transparent cost estimate for all stages of the project. The community has to be able to decide if the benefits are worth the costs associated with the project. We also have to apply a risk assessment so we will have a confidence level for these estimates. Noel Rea asked what the working estimate of the cost of the project is at this point. Jim Childers answered that it is around \$750 million. There is the potential that it could be a toll road; if that were the case, it could speed the process along. Allen Kemplen pointed out that it is important that a conceptual financing scheme be included as part of the Reconnaissance phase; Jim Childers said that it is included. Noel Rea asked when the Reconnaissance phase will start. Jim Childers said it should start by the beginning of the summer. There are three consecutive tasks: 1) Reconnaissance; 2) draft environmental document; and 3) final environmental document and decision. Noel Rea asked if we were able to obtain \$12 million before the start of the Reconnaissance phase, could the contract with the consultant be amended, or would we be stuck with a 2 year Reconnaissance phase before moving onto the EIS. Jim Childers said you would not be stuck. Noel Rea then asked if someone from the community could be on the consultant selection committee. Jim Childers said this hasn't been done before, although there are sometimes observers on the committees. It is up to the DOT&PF contracting officer. Allen Kemplen said it would be good if the Fairview Community Council president was the observer. Allen further stressed that the contractors should be tasked with looking at neighborhood revitalization and developing a strategy. A lot of prep work will be needed to make people comfortable about the idea of the road. Jim Childers said the Fairview Parkway is a perfect example of a context-sensitive project, and that community needs are being taken into consideration by constructing the road as a cut-and-cover. The contractors could explain in their proposal who they will incorporate context-sensitive design and neighborhood revitalization.

Allen Kemplen told Bob Wright that the Council is interested in these vacant lots and what can be done to keep the neighborhood from looking seedy. Allen suggested that he and the Beautification Committee should work together to develop some ideas, and that if there are labor needs, perhaps we could fold this into the United Way Day of Caring project. He added that Fairview is an active community, and we are looking forward to working with you.

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Following the discussion about the Fairview Parkway, there were comments by Paul Benson, who suggested setting up a day laborer gathering site to staff some of the construction needs of the road project. He also expressed concern about whether the vacant lots acquired in Fairview will be used to store dirt excavated from other stages of the road project. There was also a general discussion about how to recruit new members to the Council.

Dave Brossard reported that the Fairview Community Recreation Center has a new programmer—C B Stewart—who has worked for Parks and Recreation for some time, mostly in the pools. New programs are being planned, such as ballroom dancing.

Sharon Chamard reported that there was no meeting of the Public Safety Committee in December. The Computer Connection at 13<sup>th</sup> and Gambell has begun to light up the exterior doorways along Gambell.

Allen Kemplen reported that Merrill Field is buying a property at 1025 Orca, and in response to a question from Paul Benson, he elaborated and said that the Merrill Field Master Plan calls for the purchase of properties on the east side of Orca Street and the construction of aircraft hangars there. Also, there have been break-ins to aircraft parked at Merrill Field.

Harry Deuber

Treasurer's Report:

Beginning Balance 11/14/06	\$7,923.23
Deposits	\$0.00
Expenses	
Alaska Best Water	\$23.00
ACS	<u>\$19.31</u>
Total Expenses	\$42.31
12/14/06 Ending Balance	\$7,885.92

Darrel Hess commented on the agenda for the next week's General Membership Meeting. It will include the first reading of a resolution concerning asking the state from \$12 million to move into the EIS phase for the Fairview Parkway, a briefing by Allen Kemplen on the Fairview Parkway, and project updates on 13<sup>th</sup> and Gambell, 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue Terrace, 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the United Way Day of Caring, and the Downtown Plan.

Meeting adjourned at 9:56 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Sharon Chamard, Secretary

