

North Star Community Council  
October 13, 2010  
Meeting Minutes

Meeting Time: 7:03 to 9:00 p.m.

Location: North Star Elementary School Library, 605 West Fireweed Lane

1. **Call to Order and Approval of Minutes and Agenda.** The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:03 p.m. by President Matt Johnson. A sign-in sheet was distributed. The minutes of the council's last meeting (September 8, 2010) were approved (moved by Tracy Fischbach and seconded by Sharon Schlicht). The agenda was also approved (moved by Harriet Drummond and seconded by Andre Camara).
  
2. **Officer Reports.**
  - a. Matt Johnson, President, stated that he would like to make a plan about some things our group can accomplish in the next nine months. Two projects he would like us to work on are: (1) an emergency preparedness committee and (2) homelessness. Matt will initiate the first item by sending out invitations to join him on this committee.
  
  - b. Andre Camara, Vice President, stated that he has drafted a proposed change in our bylaws to clarify who can vote in the election of officers, as he offered to do at our September meeting. We did not have time to discuss this at this meeting. Hopefully, the draft can be circulated prior to our November meeting. Andre also reported that construction of the two new culverts beneath the Chester Creek bike trail exit ramp on the east side of Arctic seems finished. These two small culverts will hopefully divert flood waters from the creek north to the much larger bike trail culvert underneath Arctic and prevent flooding of the houses on the south side of the creek.
  
  - c. Barbara Pepek, Treasurer, reported that our savings account earned a 17 cent dividend and we received \$70 in donations, so our current savings total is \$446.04. We continue to have \$102.25 in our checking account. No checks were issued in the past month. Grand total in both accounts is \$548.29.
  
  - d. Susan Miller, Secretary, said she had copies of the council's bylaws available if anyone wanted one and mentioned that early voting in the November 2 election will begin next Monday, October 18. Early voting sites in Anchorage are city hall and the Elections Division office in the RAM Building at 2525 Gambell Street, Suite 100 (just south of Fireweed).
  
3. **Legislative Reports**
  - a. Rose Foley, Legislative Aide, spoke on behalf of Representative Les Gara, inviting suggestions for legislation.

4. **Assembly Reports.**

- a. Harriet Drummond reported that the Romig Hill project is finished, although some problems remain. She has asked for a stop sign, restriping of lanes and some removable barriers at the top of the pedestrian/bike trail. Apparently some vehicle drivers have gotten confused at the top and started driving down the wide multi-use path instead of the roadway. Harriet reported that on September 14, the Assembly approved the rezoning of 44 acres in the Chugach area from I-1 to I-2 in preparation for construction of a joint Chugach Electric and ML&P power plant. The Assembly also voted for restrictions on municipal employment of assembly members for one year after service, but the mayor vetoed it. The illegal campsite drama continues. The ACLU has sued to stop enforcement of certain provisions in the municipality's ordinance (the provisions concerning seizure and disposal of personal belongings) The court date on this is in November. Harriet reported that it will take six or eight months to remodel Karluk Manor (formerly the Red Roof Inn) to turn the hotel into a residence for homeless people, so a lot of homeless people will spend another winter outside. She also noted that a group of 5<sup>th</sup> graders from Rogers Park Elementary had made a fine presentation to the Assembly on the topic of panhandling. And, Harriet mentioned that, at the September 28 meeting, Assembly Chair Dick Traini introduced an ordinance to increase the excise tax on tobacco. If passed, it is estimated that it could raise 5.2 to 6 million dollars. The Campbell Creek Estuary will be transferred to city ownership, as a conservation easement, meant to maintain it in its current condition, rather than as a park. The Great Land Trust will provide some funding to support it so it will not be an added expense to the Parks and Recreation Department. Alaska Waste will remove waste for the first five years. An old building will also be removed, and a simple, unpaved trail system has been proposed. Also, a small parking lot will be built in it. The land will never be developed. AWWU will be increasing both our water and sewer rates about 11 percent. Last night, the Assembly voted 9 to 2 against allowing a new liquor store in the Huffman area. Ernie Hall mentioned that two community councils in the area opposed the liquor store, which was important to the Assembly. Dick Traini said it was a new liquor license, not the transfer of an existing license, and he does not think the community needs any more new licenses. Harriet mentioned that there are currently 85 package store liquor licenses in Anchorage.
  
- b. Dick Traini, Assembly Chair, reported that he is working on an ordinance that will limit the granting of "non-cashable" leave to municipal employees. This is a form of leave that has been granted to a few employees in order to encourage them to come to work for the municipality. The current mayor has given it to (or wants to give it to) six to eight employees. Previous mayors have also done this, and two Assembly employees receive it. These employees can use this leave for their vacations and sell their regular leave hours back to the municipality for cash. In response to a question about the Fire Island Wind Power Generation Project, he stated that it will be coming before the Assembly soon. Harriet also said that last month, the Assembly approved wind power generation on residential sites of an acre or more.

- c. Ernie Hall stated that he wanted to recognize what a good job Dick Traini is doing with the assembly. He said it is a very well organized, cordial group working with each other, with none of the ugliness of the past. Concerning the Spenard Road Project, Ernie stated that the Department of Planning has been given all the questions raised at the series of meetings he and Harriet have held, and the Department has done an excellent job of answering them. The Department is working on finalizing their responses, and when that is done, Ernie and Harriet will schedule another community meeting. Ernie then went on to discuss the main topic of our meeting, the mayor's proposed budget.

5. Mayor's Proposed Budget.

Our discussion of this topic was introduced by Ernie Hall and facilitated by Ira Perman.

Two documents were handed out: (1) a 13-page document entitled "Overview - Proposed 2011 General Government Operating Budget – Assembly Work Session – October 1, 2010" and (2) a one-page list of the eight "budget areas" in the operating budget and the percentage of the budget they represent (from Police – 22% to Health and Human Services – 3%).

Ira said our assembly members (Harriet and Ernie in particular) were looking for feedback in four areas:

- a. Our first exercise concerned our opinions about tax levels and city services in general. After an opportunity for individual comments, we each chose one of the following three options:
  - (1) Reduce services so no tax increase will be necessary
  - (2) Seek service efficiencies so a tax increase of only a few percent is needed
  - (3) Preserve the current level of service and tax to the cap to pay for it (a 7 to 7.5% tax increase)
- b. The second exercise involved a discussion followed by votes on which of the eight budget groups should have their budgets cut if cuts in services must be made.
- c. The third exercise concerned the revenue side of the equation. Some alternatives to raising property taxes that have been mentioned by other groups are: increasing the tobacco or alcohol taxes, imposing a sales tax or seasonal sales tax, reducing the senior property tax exemption, and imposing a tax on drinks served after 10 p.m. As in the previous exercises, we briefly discussed this and then voted individually by applying colored stickers to the options we each preferred.
- d. Lastly, we were each given an index card and asked to write down any specific suggestion we have to save revenue or increase efficiency.

The results of these exercises will, hopefully, be presented at our next meeting. Note: the school district budget (55% of what we pay) is not included in this discussion. Also, approval of more bonds will increase property taxes.