

North Star Community Council
September 8, 2010
Meeting Minutes

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

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

1. **Call to Order and Approval of Minutes.** The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:00 by President Matt Johnson. A sign-in sheet was distributed and everyone was asked to sign in. The minutes of the council's last meeting (May 12, 2010) were approved (moved by Harriet Drummond and seconded by Sharon Schlicht).

2. **Officer Reports.**
 - a. Matt Johnson, President, reported that he had a good summer in spite of the rain.

 - b. Andre Camara was introduced as the council's new Vice President. Andre reported that our garbage collection service (Solid Waste Services) will soon be starting automated curbside trash and recycling collection in our area. The new trash containers and recycling containers will be delivered before October 1 (when the new service starts). Harriet added that if anyone did not select a cart size by the September 1 deadline, SWS will assign a trash cart size to you. (It will be the 48-gallon size with once a week service. Note: If you want to change the size of your trash cart or frequency of service, you can do so once within a limited period of time.) We will also all get a free 96-gallon recycling cart which will be emptied every two weeks.

 - c. Barbara Pepek was introduced as the council's new Treasurer. Barbara reported that as of July, the council has \$375.71 in savings and \$102.25 in its checking account. No current encumbrances.

 - d. Susan Miller was introduced as the council's new Secretary. Susan said she had copies of the council's bylaws available if anyone wanted one and suggested that the bylaw that states who can vote in council elections be clarified to avoid the dispute about its meaning at last May's meeting. Andre Camara volunteered to draft a proposal for our next meeting. Several suggestions about different approaches to the problem and available resources (such as the bylaws of other councils) were made.

3. **Legislative Reports**
 - a. Charles Boyle, Legislative Aide, spoke on behalf of Representative Mike Doogan. Charles reported that Mike is doing well after his recent surgery. Mike is back in Anchorage and hopes to be able to attend our October meeting. Mike wished to thank the members of our council who wrote letters in support of legislation to fund efforts to solve the Chester Creek flooding problem at Arctic Avenue.

- b. Rose Foley, Legislative Aide, spoke on behalf of Representative Les Gara. Rose stated that they are working on the foster care reform bill that passed this session and other items funded in this year's budget.

4. **Assembly Reports.**

- a. Dick Traini, Assembly Chair, reported that the assembly is getting ready to go into a new budget cycle. He also reported that last Friday's Fill-the-Boot efforts by Anchorage firefighters (to raise funds for the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Alaska) were a success (raising over \$100,000). He said the mayor plans to add to next Tuesday's assembly agenda a police deployment report (on the appropriate force level for the department) although the mayor has not yet given the report to the assembly. Also on next Tuesday's agenda will be the illegal campsite issue. He said the Downtown Improvement District will also be coming up and that the Captain Cook Hotel will be assessed now for this district. In response to a question about the mayor's possible interest in imposing a sales tax, Mr. Traini discussed some of the problems with such a tax – including the fact that many Anchorage residents can shop on the military bases and pay no tax on their purchases.
- b. Harriet Drummond mentioned that the North Star council is the most heavily represented community council in the municipality (4 assembly members) even though it has the smallest population. She reported that the assembly had a quiet summer, with the Fill-the-Boot dispute with the mayor being one of the main issues. She also reported that the Romig Hill project is almost done, with only minor change orders increasing the cost (\$120,000 to reinforce the barrier wall, \$70,000 for changes in the barrier separating the road from the pedestrian path, and \$60,000 for drainage improvements). The total cost for the project will be \$2.2 million even though the engineer's original estimate was \$3.5 million. She introduced a resolution to encourage UPS not to furlough the pilots that moved to Anchorage with the understanding that they would have permanent jobs. She stated that the potential shortage of natural gas is being addressed by a plan for underground storage. She also reported that, as a result of the recent audit of the Begich administration's last budget, the assembly would be getting more frequent budget reports, but that the auditor found no criminal wrong-doing or fraudulent behavior. She also said there was no showing that the procedure used by the assembly and Begich administration was different from that used by prior administrations.
- c. Ernie Hall stated that Dick Traini is doing "an incredible job" as assembly chair. He reported on the West Anchorage District Plan. It was given to the municipality and, after four months, was returned to the drafters for further review with a three-week deadline. Harriet and Ernie got that deadline extended to the end of September. Toward the end of the year, the community will be able to see the plan and comment on it. Ernie also reported that the plan to preserve the 60

acres of the Campbell Creek Estuary in its natural state is going to happen, although not as dedicated park land. The compromise is apparently to make it a nature conservancy. Alaska Waste has agreed to do trash pick up, which it cannot do if the land becomes a park. The plan will also include extension of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. Ernie asked the council to devote part of our next meeting to a discussion of the mayor's proposed budget with him and Harriet. The proposed budget is supposed to be available by October 1. He wants to know what the council would recommend to cover the projected deficit (possibly \$26 million). He also mentioned that the school district must cut \$67 million due to loss of stimulus funds. There was also a brief discussion of the efforts to find a way to proceed with the Spenard Road Project.

5. Old and New Business

- a. **Romig Hill Mural Update.** Barbara Pepek reported that the duck mural painting got started this summer, and then it rained, so it didn't get finished. Parts looked good, parts were tacky. Then graffiti was painted on it. She reported it to the police. During a three-hour break in the weather, she painted black over the graffiti. Her plan is to ask for a road closure on a weekend in June and repaint it.

Harriet mentioned that the new barrier wall on Romig Hill will have a graffiti prevention coating. Barbara explained the importance of reporting graffiti to the police and taking pictures of it before removing it. The group discussed various examples of graffiti in the area. Barbara volunteered to take photos of graffiti and report it to police if people report it to her (phone: 244-1661; e-mail: xefirah@gmail.com). Matt suggested that it might be better to use an anonymous e-mail address. Jeannie Brooking mentioned that she is one of the volunteers who "adopted" the wooden staircase from the Chester Creek Bike Trail up to 16th and I Street. The volunteers paint over graffiti when they spot it. The municipality used to supply the paint. Mark Butler suggested that maybe we could ask the legislature for money for video cameras to help discourage graffiti.

- b. **Spenard Farmers Market Update.** Mark Butler reported that he was one of the founders of this new market, along with Rene Haag, President of the Spenard Community Council and owner of Blaine's Art. Other North Star Community Council Members (Sharon Schlicht, Susan Miller and Kim Wetzel) were also among the organizers. The market is open on Saturdays from 10 to 3 and features a variety of "Alaska grown, caught or made" products. It is located at the Chilkoot Charlie's parking lot between 25th and 26th on Spenard Road. Susan reported that Jeannie Brooking and Bonnie Jack have also volunteered to help. The market is organized and operated entirely by volunteers from the Spenard, Turnagain and North Star Areas. It's a great group of people to work with and more volunteers would be much appreciated.
- c. **Romig Hill Road Improvement Project Update.** Mark Butler reported that the road construction and new bike and walking path on the Romig Hill section of

Spenard Road may be open as soon as Friday. There will be a 10-foot multi-use trail on the west side, separated from the roadway by a barrier wall. There will also be a bridge connecting the trail to the frisbee park area. The bridge is still closed, waiting for the 6" to 8" base to cure and then be sealed, which will take another week. Mark announced that he is planning a party at 19th and Spenard from 5:00 to 7:00 on Friday afternoon (September 10) to celebrate the opening of the new road. He will use Spenard Farmers Market canopies and tables. Everyone is invited.

- d. **Chester Creek Flood Mitigation Project Update.** Mark Butler reported that he had spoken to Russ Oswald in the Municipal Project Management and Engineering Office and learned that construction of the two new culverts beneath the bike trail exit ramp on the east side of Arctic will begin soon. Mark handed out a drawing showing the placement of the two small culverts that 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.
- e. **Valley of the Moon Park Improvement Project Update.** Matt reported that he spoke to Suzanne Little in the Municipal Parks Department about this project. Some new playground equipment is being installed now, a "space ball" from Germany has arrived, an additional picnic shelter has been constructed, and a handicap accessible trail is expected to be paved by the end of the month. Also, Suzanne will need volunteers to spread wood chips (or some other kind of chips) in the area of the play equipment at some point soon. People can volunteer by contacting Suzanne at LittleSr@muni.org.
- f. **Karluk Manor (formerly the Red Roof Inn).** Harriet reported that Planning and Zoning has approved the plan to turn this hotel into a residence for homeless people. But, it will take six months to renovate it, so it will not be available for use this winter.
- g. **Homeless Camps.** Barbara Smart (who lives on the Romig Hill section of Spenard Road) said there is a huge homeless camp ("a gated community") across from her house. There has been rock throwing and other disturbances. She has reported it to the police.

Ed O'Neill, President of the Anchorage Responsible Beverage Retailers Association (ARBRA) was also present. He briefly mentioned the ARBRA Homeless Camp Outreach Policy and the desirability of opening up some of the wooded areas of our parks by removing brush and some of the lower branches.