

Rogers Park Community Council Minutes
7PM Monday, May 13, 2013
Rogers Park Elementary School Library

Board Members Attending

Janet Bidwell, President
Iris Matthews, Vice President
Jim Wright, Secretary
Cheryl Forrest, Treasurer

Absent: Bob Churchill, FCC representative (excused)

Minutes

I. Welcome.

Janet Bidwell called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m., asking members to please sign in so that the existence of a quorum could be established.

While this was going on, a representative of the Fire Department was in attendance and invited questions from the members. There were no questions. Before departing, he also invited the public to come tour the area fire station.

II. Review & Approval of Minutes.

The Minutes of the April 8, 2013 meeting were reviewed. Marilyn Pillifant moved to approve them. Cheryl Forrest seconded the motion. There were no requested changes and the Minutes were approved.

III. Assembly Reports.

Elvi Gray-Jackson addressed the Anchorage School District budget for the upcoming year, which was approved. Cuts are expected and she hopes that no positions are cut. She perceived that at the end of 2012 expenses were an estimated \$9 million under budget, with a \$33 million surplus in Municipal coffers, but the Administration says there is only \$6 million available.

Turning to the pending proposal to limit public testimony on issues before the Assembly, she explained that the proposal would limit public testimony to those who sign up at the first meeting at which the issue is taken up. If a member of the public could not attend that meeting or only realized he or she wanted to speak to the issue later, the bar would drop unless a majority of the Assembly voted to waive the requirement at the 2nd meeting.

Elvi noted that the Shriners' Club wants a conditional use permit to serve alcohol twice per month plus special events. The requested permit would be for one year, subject to renewal in May 2014. If problems arise then the Shriners might have trouble renewing. A meeting to address this issue was expected to occur on May 21st. There was an amendment or condition proposed to seal the parking lot from College Village, so that traffic to and from the Shriners would be less likely to impact College Village.

Peter Mjos asked whether the American Legion was joining the Shriners at that location, a topic raised at a prior meeting, and whether this was part of that reconfiguration. Elvi explained that it was not.

Duane Wise, who lives on Drake, across from the Shriners, expressed concern that there is not enough parking at the Shriners when events are on, so that people park in front of his home, causing added congestion at that point of ingress and egress into College Village. The Shriners previously represented that their charter barred them from leasing out the club, but they now seek to do so, he said. He is worried that the gate once opened cannot be closed. The pending proposal is for 2 times per month plus special occasions, but with the liquor license they will market their space for "special occasions" – so where does that end? He said there need to be stronger limits and a fence around the parking lot.

Joanne Wise, his wife, expressed concern about the impact on schools and residents from increased liquor consumption in the neighborhood.

Mike Bowman, who resides at Northwestern & Drake, spoke. He reported parking problems when events are held. He feels alcohol is unnecessary at civic events. He doesn't mind a little beer and wine, but on a limited basis. He agreed with Duane Wise that "special occasions" will foreseeably increase with the granting of the liquor license.

One member, who works at the nearby Wendler Middle School, suggested a resolution against the proposed liquor license. Elvi noted that public hearing on the matter is closed, but a resolution would still be presented if proffered by the community council.

Andy Hall, who resides across the street from the Shriners, spoke, saying we don't need more liquor there. Don Jose's serves liquor and Brown Jug sells it, all on that block. As for the fence, if it is built it should completely block access to Northwestern if the permit is issued.

Joanne Wise moved to adopt a resolution simply opposing granting the proposed liquor license to the Shriners' Club at Drake & Northwestern. The motion was seconded by Mike Bowman. Marilyn Pillifant inquired whether the license could be limited to meet the neighborhood's concerns? It was noted that the VFW got a liquor license subject to limits. Elvi advised that it could be limited to special events and require fencing to bar traffic access to the residential part of the neighborhood. The resolution as proposed was voted on, and passed with 22 yeas, 2 nays and 5 abstentions.

IV. Legislative Reports.

State Representative Andy Josephson introduced his aide, Megan Cavanaugh. Andy explained that his focus during the legislative session was on 1) oil and gas tax; 2) the proposed small diameter gas pipeline; 3) the operating budget; and 4) permitting “reform,” which he characterized as tending to remove Alaska residents from the public process. About the operating budget he noted that: the capital budget was \$32 million less than last year; that \$56,000 was appropriated for new lighting on Zarvis approaching Rogers Park Elementary; and that \$20 million was appropriated for the “Bragaw extension” or northeast access to the UMed District. He suggested that if the community council opposes northeast access to UMed, as it had in the past, then it should express that opposition directly to Governor Parnell.

State Representative Harriett Drummond also spoke. She noted that \$37 million of the budget is devoted to items from Project 80s, except not for Loussac Library. Her focus during the legislative session was on education issues, noting that the period for educators to obtain tenure was extended from 3 years to 5 years. There was an increase in budget items involving transporting students, but not an increase in educational funding otherwise. She explained that the Alcohol Beverage Control Board was taken out of the Department of Public Safety and placed with the Department of Commerce and Economic Development, a step she felt was unwise, as alcohol control would seem to be a public safety issue. Harriett expressed the view that the Shriners should have a catering permit rather than a commercial permit.

Senator Berta Gardner was in attendance and addressed the council. She noted that Alaska went from a budget surplus to a budget shortfall immediately upon cutting oil taxes, a step she felt was unwise. Turning to the long-proposed Knik Arm bridge, or KABATA (Knik Arm Bridge & Toll Authority), it had been subject to an independent legislative audit that found KABATA’s economic projections wildly optimistic. In effect, the KABATA board was fired and the project placed with the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation. The future of the proposal is under review. About education, she reported that a little money was devoted to each school in the district, and the state university, but that per capita funding was not increased. She said she hoped to see members attend the various upcoming constituency barbecues and a gathering at Café Del Mundo to support the petition to repeal the oil tax reduction.

Marilyn Pillifant expressed thanks to our legislators for their efforts, especially regarding education funding, prompting member applause.

V. Presentations.

A. The RPCC Annual Survey. Heather Ireland is spearheading the annual capital improvement projects survey, as she has done for many years. She had 55 responses so far, expecting at least 100 by week’s end, when the survey will close. She invited members to take part and offered the use of a computer, brought with her, for that purpose. She reported that leading priorities so far appeared to be safety on Lake Otis

Boulevard, alley maintenance and use, and pavement improvements. Heather explained the prioritization process, from survey results to budgeting and beyond. Elvi on the Assembly and Berta in the Senate assured the members that they look at and focus on community council priorities. Andy Josephson noted that the Mayor's office is pushing for northeast U-Med access in spite of expressed community council priorities. Legislator Bill Stoltze has the power to push the U-Med access goal, saying it is important to both the Municipality and UAA, although it is MOA rather than UAA that seems to be pressing that goal. \$20 million is in the budget for it, but Andy believes it will cost the public much more than that. Janet Bidwell expressed thanks to Heather for her work on the survey, and Mike Bowman expressed thanks to the legislators attending for their willingness to resist big oil and Governor Parnell.

B. UAA Master Planning Project Update. John Fontz with UAA spoke about the Campus Master Plan Renewal, covering 387 acres, about half of which is wetlands. It is updated every 5 to 7 years. He was supported in the presentation by a number of speakers, including Wende Wilber of CRW Engineering Group. The Draft Master Plan will be posted on their blog in coming days, and June 13 is the anticipated date for an open house regarding this project, allowing opportunities for public input.

Ms. Wilber spoke to the concern about open spaces and connection to nature, presenting three maps: 1) showing projected green spaces; 2) campus zoning and connectivity; and 3) pedestrian circulation and future trails. She noted that land developable for future growth is wetland to the northeast of the existing campus, toward Bragaw, presenting a fourth map showing anticipated future vehicular circulation, including a loop road through the university.

Members of the community council noted that this is a UAA plan but it affects APU. It appears that a projected road, northeast access, would disrupt trails and be incompatible with the existing trail system. Ms. Wilber responded that they would plan for that, perhaps placing trails under the roads as on Elmore.

Peter Mjos suggested that UAA build up, or densify, rather than expand the building footprints with more 2-3 story buildings. Ms. Wilber noted that elevating the parking lots was part of the planning, and wants the community council to support parking for the campus generally, as opposed to parking by building. No resolution was proposed at this time.

Discussion turned to the UAA School of Engineering and the Health Sciences Building, with a pedestrian overpass connecting the two. This was illustrated on presentation boards. It was said that the impact on views of the mountains would be limited, as it is below the treeline visually until one gets to Piper Street, and there will be 60% transparency due to glass sidewalls. There would be no cross-walk underneath, so that vehicular traffic will not be impeded. This aspect is expected to be heard by the Zoning Commission on June 3. During the changes there will be a temporary use site bounded by Providence Drive, Lake Otis Blvd., 38th Avenue and Laurel Street, for mobilization. This site will be restored after the work is done.

Berta Gardner noted that this area is expected to eventually be campus community with shops, etc. It was said that these changes would be 15-20 years out.

Peter Mjos inquired about the UAA Master Plan (with Engineering School), the UMed Plan, and \$20 million recently dedicated to the anticipated road (access from the northeast), wanting to know how these developments are tied together. Bill Fonts responded that UAA has its Master Plan but have dialogue or interaction with the others. UAA is about one year ahead of the UMed Plan, and is a member of the UMed Plan group.

The speakers were asked UAA's position on the "Bragaw Extension" (northeast access to UMed). Jim Wright noted that, per their presentation, future growth is toward East High from the campus. What about a widening of Lake Otis to alleviate the press for a through road? Janet Bidwell noted that widening 36th Avenue might also allow for better access without a through road from the northeast. The speakers responded that these are Municipality of Anchorage choices, and not on the horizon to the best of their knowledge.

C. The Citizens United Resolution Proposal. Bob Butera proposed a resolution to support an amendment to the United States Constitution to nullify the Citizens United case, by which the U.S. Supreme Court equated campaign contributions (the payment of money) with 1st Amendment free speech, and deemed corporations and labor unions "citizens" within the meaning of the Constitution's protection of free speech. In effect, the Citizens United decision nullified a variety of laws regulating the extent to which corporations and unions could give money to influence elections, and tended to preclude legislative attempts to do so, opening the door to greater corporate influence over legislators and politicians generally. Mr. Butera volunteered that the resolution should not be taken up at this meeting, due to the lateness of the hour, but that the members should be considering the issue for presentation at the next community council meeting. Passage of such a resolution would be a step toward grassroots pressure for a constitutional amendment.

D. The Alley Service Committee Progress Report. Iris Matthews provided a progress report, announcing the existence of a pilot project to serve the alleys over the next year. She offered thanks to Municipal Assembly members Dick Traini and Elvi Gray-Jackson for their help in this regard. Informational pamphlets were circulated. Iris noted that undergrounding of utilities and paving the alleys should be supported in the pending capital improvements survey, consistent with the goal of alley service. Snow removal and maintenance of alleyways should also be advocated for. "Paul" at MOA helped get this far and Iris encourages the members to send their thanks to Paul, copying those thanks to the Mayor's office. She noted that alleys already converted (e.g., Airport Heights) will not be converted back as part of the pilot project.

E. Rogers Park Elementary School Report Card Breakdown. Following up on past concerns expressed regarding the perception of declining scores among students

not part of the highly gifted program at Rogers Park School, and the School District's refusal thus far to provide data to assess that concern, Senator Berta Gardner reported that she had met with new School Superintendent Ed Graff, formerly a principal at Rogers Park School. Mr. Graff was resistant, declining to provide the data. There was some suggestion that the data did not exist and that it would be a burden to prepare it.

Previous resistance was based on the argument that such information would violate student privacy interests, but the data sought did not identify particular students. Bob Churchill, with Jim Wright assisting, had agreed to prepare a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for the data at issue. Bob was out of state, so that it was not known whether the FOIA request had yet gone out. There was member speculation whether there is a funding issue lurking here, and/or an issue of how funding is applied. Iris Matthews, Jim Wright, Roger Elconin, and others contributed to this aspect of the discussion. Jim Wright expressed his belief that the data already exists, noting that it was informally produced as to a preceding year. Berta Gardner cautioned the group that further inquiry could adversely impact property values in the neighborhood.

F. U-Med District Plan. It was contemplated that progress on the U-Med District Plan would be addressed at this meeting, complementing information about the UAA Master Plan. However, the presenter left due to the lateness of the hour. There will be a meeting on the U-Med Plan on June 5 at APU.

VI. Treasurer's Report.

Treasurer Cheryl Forest announced that there is \$211.18 in RPCC funds.

VII. Federation of Community Councils Report.

Bob Churchill was absent due to travel out of state. Accordingly, no FCC report was offered on this occasion.

Thereupon, the meeting was adjourned.