

# **Rogers Park Community Council Minutes**

## **7PM Monday, October 14, 2013**

### **Rogers Park Elementary School Library**

#### **Board Members Attending:**

Janet Bidwell, President  
Jim Wright, Secretary  
Cheryl Forrest, Treasurer

Iris Matthews, Vice President, was absent due to other commitments.  
Bob Churchill, FCC representative, was out of state.

#### **I. Welcome.**

Janet Bidwell called the meeting to order at 7:02p.m., asking members to please sign in so that the existence of a quorum could be established.

#### **II. Review & Approval of Minutes.**

The Minutes of the September 9, 2013 meeting were reviewed. Gayle Nienheuser moved to approve them. Cheryl Forrest seconded the motion. There were no requested changes and the Minutes were approved.

#### **III. Assembly Reports.**

Assembly member Elvi Gray-Jackson addressed the following matters before the Assembly.

A. AO 37 (the municipal employees' labor ordinance, barring strikes by public employees and limiting their union's powers to negotiate) continues to be a hot issue. Assembly members Traini, Gray-Jackson, Honeman and Starr moved the Assembly to repeal it. A petition drive succeeded so as to put the issue directly to the voters. There is a motion pending to put it to a vote at the April 2014 regular election, and a countermeasure proposed to delay it until an April 2015 special election.

On a related note, the issue of public input into matters before the Assembly is still pending before a task force that will make recommendations as to whether public testimony should be limited, or expanded, and on what terms.

B. There is a taxicab ordinance under consideration. A public hearing is scheduled to occur on October 22<sup>nd</sup>.

C. Implementation of the Municipality's financial software system ("SAP") is postponed, pending requests for further funding to remedy problems, including a proposal to hire a startup company to resolve perceived issues.

D. There is a pending dispute over \$10.3 million in state-granted funds for tennis courts. These funds were not requested by the Assembly, but were sought by the mayor,

going around the Assembly. It is perceived by some that it is not appropriate to reduce funding to, for example, the libraries while seeking funds for tennis courts outside the normal channels and without proper vetting of the issue. Janet Bidwell asserted that there is a need for funding tennis courts in Anchorage. Others noted that subversion of the normal processes to seek and obtain funding resulted in the grant without properly weighing options, and without properly balancing this expense relative to other needs and wants in Anchorage. Senator Berta Gardner emphasized that the matter was not properly vetted. Assembly member Elvi asserted that the issue was about deceit and proper process, and that the mayor had subverted public process. Assembly member Dick Traini noted that existing facilities for among other things hockey have been degraded. Both Dick and Berta said that if tennis is an appropriate goal, then it should be done right, and not this way. Jean Smith weighed in that she likes tennis and wants to see The Alaska Club have some competition. Elvi responded that she likes tennis, too, but that we need to do it right, and balance other needs, considering maintenance costs and alternatives.

Jim Richardson asked whether there were enough votes to override a possible veto by the mayor of a successful vote to repeal AO 37? Dick Traini responded that he supports a public vote to apply pressure to prevent a veto.

Dave Evans sought clarification about SAP, the computer program. He noted that Black & Beach was the contractor, and he believed that the contract may have been a cost-plus arrangement. Dave inquired whether it could be done a different way? Elvi and Dick said that it is hard to get good information from the administration, that they've had to learn to ask precisely the right question or risk being misled. Representative Harriett Drummond drew on her experience with various similar systems, such as the property valuation assessment system, and asked whether the expense of SAP is taking funds away from these other programs, which need updating? Elvi said yes.

#### **IV. Legislative Reports.**

Senator Berta Gardner reported that legislators are moving out of the legislative offices in downtown Anchorage, to occupy temporary offices. This will tend to be disruptive, and she asks that constituents be patient, and leave messages, which will be responded to.

Senator Berta Gardner described upcoming activities, including hearings of the Senate Education Committee regarding funding, suicide prevention meetings in Fairbanks, the AFN Convention in Fairbanks, the Legislative Ethics Committee meeting, meetings with the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, and to address children's health care needs. Sen. Gardner reported that she will not be attending the Women's Summit, led by Sen. Lesil McGuire, because they took women's health care off the table.

Representative Harriett Drummond spoke next. She incorporated Berta's information, and recounted further meetings and hearings going on between legislative sessions, including PTA events, and site visits to Mat-Su mines. She spoke with concern of HB 77 regarding water reservations. She said it had narrowly passed in the House and is now

before the Senate. It seeks to limit public participation and narrows decision-making regarding water rights.

Representative Andy Josephson was represented by his assistant Megan. He is attending a conference of legislators for the northwest states regarding natural resource policy. Megan encouraged the attendees to read Representative Josephson's recent article regarding Medicare expansion and the Affordable Care Act, which appeared recently in the Anchorage Daily News.

## **V. Presentations.**

**A. Northern Access to U-Med.** Rachel Steere and Brad Melacek presented the status of plans to move forward with a northern access route through the UMed District, a project repeatedly opposed by resolutions of the Rogers Park Community Council, among others. They explained that the first step had been to identify the need. The second step had been the 2011 study of alternatives. They identified four alternate routes. A lively debate took place at this point, Helen Nienheuser noting that a fifth alternative had apparently been dropped, and Jim Richardson inquiring whether this is comparable to a highway. Ms. Steere responded that a fifth, the transportation demand model, was combined with the other models, so that it was not discarded, and Mr. Melacek characterized the contemplated route as an arterial road rather than a highway, noting that the Elmore extension to the south is properly considered arterial. Ms. Steere said that the public outreach has been extensive, but Ms. Nienheuser disagreed, saying that those in charge had not listened to the public. Ms. Steere said she chose not to attend the legislators' meeting last week because she did not want to be berated by argumentative people.

Peter Mjos weighed in, noting that the report refused to consider the no road alternative, that favored by all community councils in the area, and that nonattendance at the legislators' meeting showed great disrespect. He characterized it as another example of circumventing proper public process. Mr. Melacek responded that the need and purpose is wider than the community councils – it's citywide and even statewide, he said. One member spoke up, asserting that the project leaders were ignoring different values and underscoring that in a democracy those values should be heard. Mr. Melacek noted that growth at U-Med has been exponential, in construction, community functions, and jobs, outstripping growth elsewhere in the state. This means greater traffic. He then turned to the alternatives under consideration, presenting a map of U-Med with the routes shown.

Two routes, red and green, could be done by the University without state money. These are one lane options. Two other routes, orange and purple, would involve four lanes (2 each way). He said that UAA Drive, when red would connect to, already providing northern access, has too many pedestrians, so that it could not feasibly be expanded to accommodate increased traffic needs.

Mr. Melacek said that they had considered about 60 variables and had crunched the numbers among all these permutations, which were too complex to describe for present

purposes. Ms. Neinheuser believed that the statistics were skewed regarding the costs of no-road alternatives. One member expressed concern regarding the impact of a northern access road on East High School. Ms. Steere said that was outside the project area but that they had identified those concerns, and were mindful of impacts on East High as well as Winterbury school.

Ann Lorber asked whether they had considered increased on-campus housing to mitigate commuter traffic needs. Mr. Melacek responded that they had tried free shuttle service for students, but that the students didn't use it. One woman, who works at UAA, noted that the shuttle was not user-friendly: the designated pickup spot is remote and the specific times were not convenient to meet needs. Ms. Steere claimed it would cost \$20 million to fund 15 minute bus intervals for just two years. Ms. Bidwell noted that this was originally justified as needed to reduce ambulance times and as a student corridor. That seemed to have been lost. Ms. Steere and Mr. Melacek said there is a Memorandum of Understanding between UAA and APU as to what they want.

Member Dave Evans, an engineer, asked whether the wetlands delineation is complete and available? Mr. Melacek said yes, and available for about 2 weeks. He said that the unbuildable wetlands portion is actually much smaller than MOA wetlands maps, which were mostly based on fly-overs long ago. The Corps of Engineers will have the final say, and he did not know what public process is involved in that determination. No full environmental impact statement is required, as no federal funds are involved.

Helen Nienheuser inquired whether Goose Lake and Mosquito Lake, in the routes area, are connected? No, said Mr. Melacek. Peter Mjos asked whether \$20 million, the projected cost, would be enough to do the orange route? Mr. Melacek responded that \$30 million was the cost of all of the Elmore extension.

Helen Nienheuser heard that legislator Bill Stoltze of Eagle River had pushed this through the legislature at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, saying his constituents need to get from Chugiak/Eagle River to U-Med. She questioned this. Mr. Melacek and Ms. Steere said they had not heard that.

Helen Nienheuser noted that Martin Luther King Boulevard was supposed to provide for traffic coming from that direction. It seems to have worked. Why do we now need this new road? Mr. Melacek responded that the new road is not for pass-through traffic. One member (Tamara) noted that when she visited Switzerland they undergrounded roadways. Would that cost too much? Mr. Melacek said it would be at least 8 times the expense to do that. The issues are compounded insofar as wetlands are involved. Mr. Richardson asked the presenters to explain why a major pass-through roadway is a good idea on the University of Alaska campus, thereby increasing congestion, and challenged them to find supporting citation to any authority as to any university campus. Mr. Melacek responded only that the contemplated speed limit would be 35 mph.

Helen Nienheuser said that campus feel is a desirable goal. Ms. Steere agreed, saying they had looked into that. Ms. Nienheuser stated her perception that the APU board is

made up of realty people who want this. Ms. Steere said that was simply untrue. Mr. Melacek said that schools need to develop to stay alive, particularly APU. That is why they sold land to UAA, and chose to allow development of the Alaska Spine Clinic on APU land. One member responded that this sounds like the old American story – the need to develop, and so the need to build more roads. But many Alaskans came from elsewhere to get away from that mindset.

Tom Obermeyer said “Isn’t a big part of this the failure to widen 36<sup>th</sup>, Lake Otis, and Northern Lights?”

**B. The Airport (Merrill Field) Noise Study.** John McPerson presented the status of the Merrill Field Airport Noise Study. There will be a public meeting on October 22, from 4-7 p.m., at the Merrill Field Aviation Technology Building. About one year ago there was an update to the Merrill Field master plan, for FAA design and safety standards compliance. The inspection report is now ready. Draft alternatives of various improvements over the next 20 years will be presented to the public. The noise study is part of this process and involves consideration of the aircraft fleet mix as well as flight patterns. Helicopter noise has changed, and airplane traffic is about half of what it was 20 years ago, perhaps due to higher fuel and maintenance costs. Fairview is the neighborhood most impacted, with the loudest impact being take-offs. There are federal funds available for those where noise exceeds acceptable parameters, to replace older windows with insulated windows, etc.

**C. Alley Service Committee.** Dave Evans presented the status report for the Save Our Alleys Task Force, Iris Matthews being out of town. SWS has agreed to a one year pilot program which covers most, but not all, of our alleys. There was an alley cleanup that picked up an estimated 14 tons of garbage and debris. This was considered a significant success. If issues with overhanging wires, please let Iris Matthews know, as she is coordinating with GCI and other utilities.

Rob Malone lives on Maplewood on an alley that apparently will not comply. Brian at SWS said that this alley is not included in the pilot program. Iris went to Paul, who is Brian’s boss, and Paul contradicted Brian. During the walk-through Brian was noticeably hostile. Janet Bidwell noted that Paul has been on our side, even if Brian is not. Brian says that RPCC is misleading the residents about what SWS will do, and he said 14 tons was not from the alleys, but from people bringing in their junk whether from the alley cleanup or not. Rob notes that he saw some abuses, but felt it is SWS’s job to police that, not ours.

**D. Northern Lights Blvd. Meridian Landscaping Proposal.** Tom Obermeier proposes a resolution to landscape the meridian on Northern Light Blvd, both for appearance’s sake and for noise reduction. He provided a handout of the resolution as proposed, with attached an application for beautification encroachment permit. Mr. Obermeier and Ms. Bidwell agreed that this could be deferred to the next meeting, given the lateness of the hour. However, after a check to ensure we still had a quorum, Dave Evans moved to adopt, and this was seconded by Gayle Nienheuser. Helen Nienheuser

inquired whether this project was on the Rogers Park Community Council's most recent CIP survey. Ms. Bidwell said yes, that it was number 10 on our list of priorities. The matter was put to a vote and passed by a vote of 11 yeas, 2 nays, and 0 abstentions recorded. Note that a quorum was present with 15 members.

**VI. Announcements.**

President Janet Bidwell concluded by inviting the members to view the Connect Anchorage Initiative Update regarding the New Seward and 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue project.

The meeting was then adjourned at 9:10 p.m.