

Rogers Park Community Council Minutes

7PM Monday, November 11, 2013

Rogers Park Elementary School Library

Board Members Attending:

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

Bob Churchill, FCC representative, was out of state.

I. Welcome.

Janet Bidwell called the meeting to order at 7:05p.m., asking members to please sign in so that the existence of a quorum could be established. There were not enough members in attendance for a quorum at this stage of the meeting. Therefore, review & approval of the Minutes of the October meeting were deferred to the next meeting.

II. Assembly Reports.

Assembly member Elvi Gray-Jackson was in Seattle on Assembly business. Assembly Member Dick Traini 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 matter of dispute. 22,000 voters signed a petition to put the issue directly to the voters. The Assembly asked to put it on the April 2013 ballot, but the mayor vetoed that request, even though it costs more to do a special election. The Assembly refuses to recognize a power to veto the election schedule, and the City Clerk set it on for the regular election. There is a lawsuit now pending between the mayor and the Assembly over this.

B. The issue of public input into matters before the Assembly is still pending, the task force having made a variety of recommendations to be considered.

C. The taxicab ordinance (69 pages) should pass at the November 18, 2013, meeting.

D. The dispute over tennis courts continues. It was part of a ~\$37 million appropriation, of which ~\$26 million is spent, leaving \$10.3 million which the mayor would like to use for tennis courts near his home, at the Dempsey-Anderson parking lot. His opponents are considering purchase of the North Building, for basketball, racquetball, and tennis, but as Janet Bidwell pointed out, there are significant problems with that building. Mr. Traini noted that the ice rinks need repair, which is a competing concern.

E. The Municipal budget is expected to be done and the November 18, 2013 meeting of the Assembly.

F. The towing ordinance remains pending, to address, among other things, problems associated with nonconsensual tows.

It was noted that a new apartment building is going up along the Old Seward Highway, and that kids living there may be going to school here at Rogers Park.

Member Ann Lorber noted that the Library Foundation had applied for funds to Assembly. Mr. Traini responded that it is before the Assembly.

III. Legislative Reports.

Senator Berta Gardner spoke to the issue of the tennis courts, noting that proper procedure was not followed. Her understanding is that the non-profit ATA and pro-tennis folk harassed the Turnagain Community Council president, avoided the normal vetting by Parks & Recreation, and bypassed the Municipal Assembly. She noted her belief that this money would have gone to support the library.

Senator Gardner addressed the legislative office move in downtown Anchorage, asking that constituents not avoid the disruption, instead staying in contact.

She next addressed schools. She and other legislators, including Representatives Andy Josephson and Harriet Drummond, have been meeting with the schools, encouraging and guiding them how to seek funds and resources. Some issues of interest were: suicide prevention training, which they are monitoring to see if it works; the bullying issue; and involvement through PTAs and family engagement plans. Tom Obermeier noted his understanding that suicide prevention training reduced suicide by 17% in other locations where it was used, and that it is designed to take a minimum of teacher time.

She also recently visited Clare House (the emergency shelter for women and children, run by Catholic Social Services), where there are now 30 rooms for short terms and 10 rooms for longer term needs.

Farther afield, Sen. Gardner will visit the Pt. Thompson (oil and gas) field, east of Prudhoe Bay.

She has also recently focused on DUI Therapeutic Courts (Wellness Court), which provides judicial oversight of offender treatment, with the goal of coming to terms with alcohol addiction. Tom Obermeier noted that the law provides for progressively greater penalties for each DUI (driving under the influence) conviction, including taking the offender's license away – but they often drive anyway. Berta noted that car confiscation is theoretically automatic upon the 3rd conviction, but that it is delayed for their day in court, so they still have wheels between arrest and conviction. Therapeutic courts emphasize dealing with alcohol addiction to supplement the existing penalty approach.

Sen. Gardner spoke of the New Life Development Center. This is a facility designed to provide safe housing for those trying to adapt to life after prison. She also spoke briefly about ANSEP, the Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program, which provides resources and assistance for Alaska Native higher education.

Representative Andy Josephson also addressed the funding dispute over Anchorage tennis courts. He likes tennis but is troubled by the process employed. He does not believe tennis was ever mentioned in Juneau as this money was appropriated. He did not attend our last RPCC meeting because he was attending a conference of legislators in the Northwest to compare notes with legislators from other states.

Rep. Josephson invited members to read his recent Compass piece in the newspaper addressing Medicaid in Alaska. He said that Sen. Begich has indicated that no Medicaid expansion in Alaska will mean no federal subsidies for health care here, which is very troubling to him. He notes that there is pressure now on Governor Parnell to change his position and allow Medicaid expansion for the good of Alaska citizens.

Turning to education, Rep. Josephson noted that he and Rep. Harriet Drummond are on the Financial Committee for the Department of Education. The Sustainable Education Taskforce delves into each item of the budget to see what it can cut. Andy Halcro, sitting on the taskforce, has said "I don't know where we're going with this" or words to that effect. Rep. Josephson agrees. He discussed regional campuses, noting that in 1972-73 we built ~220 community schools. We are not trying to undercut that accessibility by consolidating them at hub communities. He too has been visiting local schools and attended Anchorage School District Superintendent Ed Graff's meeting regarding ASD funding. He reports a deficit of \$29 million next year, and \$49 million over the next two years.

Rep. Josephson will also be joining the upcoming Pt. Thompson trip. He went to Dillingham to look into issues related to the projected Pebble Mine.

Member Bob Butera asked what's the holdup win the legislature regarding student funding? Berta responded. Some legislators want to say that the public schools are failing, and replace them with private schools; some legislators want to bust the unions (e.g., the NEA) that they argue are holding the schools hostage; and some legislators say they will give money only when the schools improve. The latter approach makes no sense to her, as the schools need the resources so that they can improve. Some of these same folks in Juneau didn't hold the oil companies to that same performance standard.

Member Tom Obermeier said that Governor Parnell has flatlined student allocation. Tom said he didn't see how vouchers can replace the whole public school system. Berta explained that a stipend is paid for home schooling, but less than the per student allocation in public schools. Dick Traini noted that Juneau has limited what we (the Municipal Assembly) can allocate to Anchorage School District (ASD).

Bob Butera noted that ASD said a lot of money is going into medical (PERS and TERS benefit programs). Berta explained that, while it is an expense, PERS/TERS is not part of the per student allocation. Rep. Josephson reported that Mark Foster said that such money (referred to by the ASD) goes to medical coverage for teachers after retirement, and that it is undermining funds to students.

Dick Traini and Berta Gardner jointly emphasized that, unlike private schools, public schools cannot turn kids away.

Sen. Gardner announced that on January 7 there will be a constituency meeting and invited all to come. Watch for the announcements. She'll address Larry Persilly's report(s) on the status of oil development in Alaska and gas for Anchorage.

Ann Lorber inquired why the Board of Game is allowing wolf trapping in Denali Park. Rep. Andy Josephson spoke of HB 170, 171 and 172, that would create buffer zones for the taking of wildlife, provide that at least one of nine members of the Board of Game must be non-consumptive (that is, not a hunter or trapper), and that would repeal certain game management laws. He described the current Board of Game approach as a "Game Farm" and expressed concern about federal "underreach," offering the example of the Kenai Federal Reserve, deferring to the state Board of Game to allow expanded brown bear hunts. The state Board of Game allows aerial hunting, gassing of wolf pups, and snaring to kill them.

Representative Harriet Drummond was the next to speak. Attending the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) in Fairbanks, she heard there that Medicaid expansion would impact 40,000 people in Alaska, amounting to \$1.1 billion in benefits, and providing 4,000 new jobs, representing another \$1.2 billion in salaries and wages coming into the state.

Harriet expressed concern over the recent reduction in rape clinics, which forces victims to go to the hospital emergency rooms where they can't be turned away, passing the expense back to the public anyway. She disagrees with these reductions in health resources in Alaska.

Harriet recently visited AVTEC (Alaska Vocational Technical Center) in Seward, which provides vocational opportunities and training, including in wind power, maritime skills, maritime fire fighting simulators, a culinary institute, and new dorms for 120 students. At present they are not graduating enough students to fill available jobs, with about 200 students now attending.

Harriet also visited Mat-Su coal mine sites. Neighboring residents there cannot sell their homes because coal mines are contemplated. She also spoke of the Clare House visit, as well as the Rural Cap Care Center, which provides child care downtown. Harriet noted that preschools are underfunded in Alaska, but that they provide a substantial head start that pays dividends in educational progress over the years. One dollar spent on Head Start is estimated to save seven dollars late in societal costs. Addressing the new state assessment program for public schools, displacing the No Child Left Behind standards, she supports it and considers it a success. She gave as an example the North Star (Title I) School, with a graduation rate increased from 65% to 72%. She noted the disparity between requiring school accountability but not requiring oil company accountability, referenced previously by Sen. Gardner. Harriet noted that the once widespread ASD

mediator program (which reduced playground conflict, bullying) has now shrunk to just two elementary schools due to funding cuts. The two remaining schools with mediation programs are Rogers Park and North Star Elementary.

IV. Presentations.

A. Alley Service Committee. Iris Matthews reported that she had nothing new since the last meeting. She has not yet received the quarterly report from SWS regarding remaining problems.

V. Remaining Business and Discussions.

Treasurer's Report: Cheryl Forrest reports that we have \$231.22 in the RPCC account.

FCC Report: Jim Wright sat in for Bob Churchill at the most recent FCC meeting, Bob being on the East Coast at the time. Bob had previously noted that the FCC was late preparing its last quarter budget, required by its contract with the Municipality. At this meeting, the FCC (Federation of Community Councils) passed its last quarter budget for 2013, as well as its 2014 budget.

The other item of significant business taken up by the FCC was a proposed contract between the FCC and the University of Alaska Archives Department, by which it was proposed that the FCC would provide UAA the records of the FCC and the individual community councils for archiving – that is, preserving and making these records available to researchers. Mr. Wright, a lawyer, was asked to sit on the FCC Archive Committee in light of his legal perspective. The committee has met, discussing issues of ownership, confidentiality and/or public records designation. It also visited the UAA Archives and met with its representative, discussing optional models for such a contract. One model in mind is individual contracts with the various community councils. The committee contemplates the circulation of a model contract or contracts during the first quarter of the coming year.

Discussion: Dave Evans inquired what ever happened to the concern about getting itemized data showing the performance of Rogers Park students in the gifted program as opposed to the other students there? Sen. Gardner wished to respond. She reports that the state has no disaggregated data – only ASD has it and ASD won't give it. She expressed the opinion that Carol Comeau's 2011 data, providing data reflecting gifted student performance and other student performance, previously disclosed, is inaccurate, because we need to look at three categories: gifted, neighborhood students, and those bused in who are often poor performers. Jim Wright, on the committee to look into this, spoke next. He said that: 1) the unstated issue is why the secrecy? And noted that the key issue is whether this data is a public record that can be lawfully withheld; 2) that he understands Berta to say, based on her discussions with Supt. Graff, that there are three categories, not two (which Berta affirmed); and so 3) we'd like to see that data, which the committee is seeking by way of a Freedom of Information Act request.

Turning to the Minutes of October 14, Dave Evans asked that the last sentence of section V, subsection C, on page 5 be dropped. While it appeared to be literally correct, it also seemed to be unnecessary and impolitic. Others seemed to concur and Jim Wright indicated that he could certainly take it out.

Finally, Dave Evans noted that as we have over \$200 in the bank, do we want to spend it on getting word out to residents of the community council's presence, as for printing of flyers by the FCC? Janet Bidwell said it was a thought worth considering in the future.

The meeting was then adjourned.