

Rogers Park Community Council Minutes

7 PM Monday, October 13, 2014

Rogers Park Elementary School Library

Board Members Attending:

Iris Matthews, President
Travis Smith, Vice President
Jim Wright, Secretary
Cheryl Forrest, Treasurer
Bob Churchill, FCC representative

I. Welcome.

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. Members were asked to sign in to establish a quorum. A quorum was present.

II. Minutes: May 2014.

Bob Churchill moved to approve the September 2014 Minutes. Marilyn Pillifant seconded. The September 2014 Minutes were approved as submitted.

III. Treasurer's Report.

Cheryl Forrest reported that there is \$202.87 in the RPCC treasury.

IV. The FCC Report.

Rogers Park Community Council is a member of the Federation of Community Councils, or FCC. Our representative to the FCC, Bob Churchill, reported as follows. At the last meeting the proposed budget was passed by the FCC and forwarded to the City Clerk and Assembly. It is the same as last year's budget. The FCC has a new treasurer, Kevin Fimon. We hope to have new community council officer training sessions, as we did last year, and seek funding for same. The Turnagain Community Council has a petition for release of documents regarding executive board deliberations, an issue being watched with interest. The Anchorage School District report included a presentation discussing how to deal with middle schools – i.e., should they remain as they are, or move to a grade 7-9 system, or experiment selectively? There is no decision as yet. There was discussion about the Mayor's office participating in community council meetings and whether this is to be encouraged. It was noted that this administration has only recently started doing so. Oil and gas consultant Brad Keithley reported to the FCC about deficit spending by the state and that it is not sustainable without new sources of revenue, which may include the PFD.

V. Assembly Reports.

Assembly member Elvi Gray-Jackson presented, as follows:

- The Mayor's 2015 General Government and Utility Operating and Capital budgets were introduced at the October 7th meeting. Highlights follow:
 - The Administration faced a \$1.8M Budget Shortfall.
 - Majority of Services reduced to cover shortfall were within other services i.e., contracts, travel, supplies and equipment.
 - Total Budget - \$471.4 million.
 - Funds acquired through attrition will allow for two police academies.
 - Number of Sworn positions within both Police and Fire are static.
 - Seven full-time vacant positions eliminated within the following departments: Chief Fiscal Officer, IT, Community Development, and Health and Human Services. One position in Mayor's Office will be eliminated July 2015.
 - Seven full-time positions were added within the following departments: Employee Relations, Finance, and Public Transit.
 - Senior Center Funding reduced – Anchorage (\$67,207) and Chugiak (\$41,190).
 - One full-time position (filled) is eliminated in the Parks and Recreation Department.

- Work Sessions will be held at City Hall in the Assembly Conference Room #155 as follows:
 - October 10th – 1:00 – 4:00
 - October 17th – 11:00 – 1:00
 - October 24th – 1:00 – 4:00
 - November 24th - To review Assembly Budget Amendments – Time TBA.

- Public Hearings regarding the budget – Assembly Chambers after 6:00 p.m. as follows:
 - November 5th
 - November 18th

- Special Meeting – November 26th to approve the budget.

- SAP – The Administration is requesting the Assembly's approval for another \$3M by way of a loan for the continued implementation of the Financial and Human Resource Enterprise Resource Planning System ("SAP"). The Public Hearing will be held at the October 21st meeting.

- Amy Demboski and Elvi Gray-Jackson are requesting a \$200,000 appropriation from Fund Balance to provide funding for an independent review of both the Payroll System (Kronos) and SAP implementation. The Public Hearing will be held at the October 21st meeting. In September 2013, a resolution was brought forward by Mr. Traini and Ms. Gray-Jackson for the same purpose, but it failed 4-7. Current costs for SAP - \$31.6M.
- At the October 7th meeting, AO 2014-126, which extends the time period for the new Title 21 implementation to December 31, 2015, was approved 8-3.
- Chugach Access Plan (CAP) first public hearing was held on September 9th and continued to the meeting of September 23rd. Forty-eight persons testified – 38 in favor of immediately approving the plan and 10 concerned about property rights. The Assembly held two work sessions. The CAP Plan approval was postponed until the meeting of November 5th to allow for the Chugiak/Eagle River Advisory Board the opportunity to review the Plan as required by Code.

Next Assembly Meeting: October 21st.

Peter Mjos asked is Title 21 not final yet? Elvi said that at present one can pick the old code or the new code, but after December 31, 2015, it would be only the new code. Dick Traini added that the extension is apparently to defeat Title 21's purpose. In the interim, the Assembly can still alter Title 21's terms.

Marilyn Pillifant said she thought the administration said there was a surplus recently. Why is there a deficit now? Elvi said that the Mayor's budget was \$2.5 million below the tax cap, so there doesn't need to be any deficit. The Mayor does this every year – the deficit always becomes a surplus. Another police academy costs \$22 on a \$100,000 home, but he wants to show a deficit to avoid paying for it.

Next there was a presentation by a representative of the Anchorage Fire Department. Captain "Mike" asked that we all check our smoke detectors and CO detector batteries. Keep kids off the ice, and pets too, as freezing occurs.

Bob Churchill asked about the expiration date on fire alarms. Mike said that CO detectors expire. Fire alarms should still work with new batteries. Peter Mjos asked where best to position them. Mike noted that smoke rises; as for CO, there is no consensus. It is source-dependent rather than high or low, so it's best to place it near the source.

Sen. Berta Gardner said that two weeks ago an elderly uncle was disabled and fell. Help was needed with the aunt who was very distressed. She wanted to thank the AFD for its prompt response.

Mike said all are invited to visit the fire station, but it's best to call first.

Returning to the Assembly Report, Assembly member Dick Traini reported that the towing ordinance is coming up. It will be introduced on November 5, with a public hearing thereafter. It is designed to put an end to predatory towing practices.

Bob Churchill inquired about the status of Uber ride-sharing? Dick noted that Uber lost in court today. Judge Corey ruled that Uber is governed by the MOA taxi ordinances if they charge for rides. The Assembly will look at this, as ride-sharing is needed in some areas.

VI. Legislative Reports.

Sen. Berta Gardner discussed the following points.

1. She wants the National Guard issue subject to an independent investigation. She believes there are broader issues than the public is presently aware of.
2. She questions the current wave of confidentiality pledges required for legislators to get information regarding oil and gas. She is concerned about this practice and will not sign such a pledge.
3. She had meeting with opponents of KABATA (Knik Arm Bridge & Toll Authority), and the UMed road project (“Northern Access”). She had meetings with the proponents of the 36th Avenue improvements and others regarding traffic and road improvements. She is listening to their concerns.
4. Friday there is a symposium on health care for Alaska.

She attended a presentation by Alaska Common Ground that addressed the problem of less oil and higher costs to get it means less revenue for Alaska. The outlook is grim, and consideration was given to options for decreased spending and increased revenue sources.

Turning to education funding, Berta said her goal is to hold education harmless from these changes. If we do away with the PFD, it is regressive and inequitable as low income families are more heavily impacted than others.

Peter Mjos asked wasn’t oil and gas consultant Brad Keithley against the SB21 (Parnell oil tax) repeal? Berta agreed that he was.

Dick Traini noted that the Alaska National Guard commander in chief is Governor Parnell. He’d like to know when he knew and what he knew about the Guard scandal. The National Guard Chaplains wanted to see him in 2010 about this. Victims wanted to see him in 2011. But he only took any action after the Pentagon investigated and issued a scathing report. Berta said we need a thorough housecleaning – not just two resignations. Why are there no prosecutions? Peter Mjos asked whether the Governor’s behavior is an impeachable offense? Berta acknowledged that such an argument could apparently be made. Bob Churchill noted that he has a Human Resources background and wanted to insure that those people in positions of management/control are included among those held responsible.

Turning to the issue of confidentiality pledges, Jim Wright asked whether this didn't pose a conflict of roles between the purported "trade secrets" of industry and the legislator's duty of disclosure to the public? And whether this conflict is exacerbated when the State opts to become "partners" or "shareholders" with private enterprise, as is being discussed with gas projects? Jim noted that the law regarding minority shareholders imposed a duty of confidentiality but without control – a role at odds with good government and regulation of industry. Berta agreed that is very much a conflict and concern.

Rep. Andy Josephson said that he sits on the Joint Resources Committee and the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee, which serves as a sort of interim legislature when the full legislature is not in session. He said that many boards and commissions address licensing and are self-funded, so that license fees vary widely from year to year. This is a concern he is interested in.

Another focus is HB278, an omnibus education bill. He wants to commission consultants for two reports: 1) to look at the foundation formula; and 2) to address other options for efficiency, such as consolidating school districts and pay at school districts.

Turning to the work of the Labor & Commerce Committee, there were hearings on the status of the Affordable Care Act, an election issue. The Parnell administration says it cannot control cost increases, so opposes the Affordable Care Act in Alaska. The Committee is engaged in fact finding, and more can foreseeably be done.

Andy recently traveled to check out the proposed Susitna Dam.

Andy and Berta are running unopposed this election season, but are looking at capital budget projects and exempt salaries, where there is room for cuts. Andy agrees with Berta that the National Guard issue needs a civilian side investigation and oversight.

Peter Mjos asked that if there is decreased revenue, why is there an increased press for big ticket projects like the Juneau road, the Susitna Dam, KABATA, etc., all competing for funds with human needs like education and public safety? Andy said that we may see \$3 billion per year of revenue from gas severance taxes in a few years, so maybe in the long term these larger expenses will be covered.

Rep. Harriet Drummond had to leave due to another appointment, so she did not address the members.

VII. Presentations.

A. East High School Stadium Plans. The East High Principal, Sam Spinella, presented, with Dwayne Adams of Earthscape supplementing. The stadium promotes a sense of community through athletics. At-risk kids are involved. Give them something to excel at in a positive way and it will lead to long term benefits. There will be a grandstand on two sides. The road side does not afford enough room. The scoreboard

will be placed diagonally to face the stands. Storage buildings are included for sports equipment. Flagpoles and fencing are also part of the improvements.

Peter Mjos asked if this is for football only? Dwayne said it is convertible to soccer and other sports, and usable for runners, etc. Sam said the field will be used all summer, as well as during the school year. Dwayne assured us that it is for community use, and not just school use. Cheryl Forest asked who pays for maintenance after it is built? ASD, said Sam. The lighting will be more efficient there, as well.

Bob Churchill noted that a problem at South High School was that then ASD superintendant Bob Crystal promised the neighborhood there'd be no grandstands. ASD later changed positions, which led to conflict. Dwayne said that was a very different neighborhood and demographic. Maintenance costs will be lower on this project, too, with artificial turf. It is safer, too. Berta Gardner asked wouldn't rental fees cover a good part of that? The presenters said that many users are non-profits so there will not be much income from fees. Maintenance costs are lower, though, with artificial turf, the required maintenance effort being four times per year for just a few hours.

B. 36th Avenue & New Seward Road Project Update. Shawn Holland of DOT and Paul Witt of HDR Engineering presented. They are at the environmental document and 30% design phase. There has been much public input through the website. Paul said this is one of Anchorage's most congested intersections with the most motor vehicle accidents. An effort is being made to make the highway grade separated along the length of the highway corridor. It is a 20 year project and not funded now. Their focus is on building the highway over 36th Avenue. They contemplate ramps on the interior between opposing lanes (between north and south opposing lanes). They expect a temporary lane from 36th onto the highway northbound on the east side – i.e., temporary until the next section is built, at Benson Blvd. Shawn said the 30% design stage is coming up. Planned right of way purchases are mostly done. There are some “sliver” purchases still likely by way of fine-tuning. They anticipate a budget of \$50-\$60 million. It is about 40% funded (\$26 million) by the State. They target inclusion in the 2016 capital budget with two years to build it. The 2016 start date is pretty optimistic in light of revenue concerns, however. There are pedestrian access concerns involving trails, and looking for connectivity. A bike trail may be within the right of way. Noise is especially a concern with Geneva Woods. They are modeling this. Sound walls will definitely be a part of the design. It will be an elevated highway. They contemplate removing some streetlights for better flow on 36th Avenue.

Ann Lorber asked why there seems to be no unified plan for 36th/ Benson/ Northern Lights crossings? The presenters indicated that it was unified in that they utilized H2H studies and options, and H2H was a larger plan.

Bob Churchill asked whether we could take part in the noise reduction plans. The presenters committed to include us in a conversation/meeting with their "noise control" expert.

Cheryl Forest noted that she lives at New Seward and Fireweed. There is huge noise at night. She suggested they do their studies at night, too. The presenters acknowledged that their studies were focused on daytime traffic noise. Jim Wright noted his involvement on the Northern Lights Sound Barrier Project, that there are legal decibel requirements and that it is much cheaper and required, to do noise reduction measures during the project rather than to retrofit noise barriers later. The presenters characterized these laws as merely policy. Jim disagreed, noting that it is law at federal, state and municipal levels, all consistent regarding mandatory noise thresholds. The presenters noted that there are economic exceptions, as where not enough “receptors” are involved. Jim translated “receptors” to mean people – us – and emphasized that it is important to study night noise as well as day noise insofar as it impacts real people, and that we would like public access and input into the process of noise reduction measures.

VIII. Announcements.

A. The Fireweed & Chevron Liquor License Application. The applicants withdrew their application for a liquor license at this location, so our concerns about increased inebriants and the like are now at rest from this source.

B. Municipal Ballot Measure 1. Eric Tuott of AFD explained that there is a good deal of confusion regarding campaign signs pro and con over AO37. He represents the “No” side on this initiative, which is the side that would repeal AO37. AO37 would result in the removal of staffing, equipment and resources for public services including fire and police. We are somewhat cushioned from the impact in midtown due to nearby backup. A bigger concern is in outlying areas with remote backup.

Bob Churchill asked what are the recommended standards? NFPA (National Fire Protection) standard 1710 says four to a truck minimum. AFD has 40% of that (40% of trucks comply). OSHA (Occupational Safety & Health Act) 2N20 says 2 in and 2 out at a fire. If we have only three to a truck, then we have to wait for backup unless the risk to firemen is worth it, as to save lives in a building. Some associations want five or six to a truck as the minimum. We are low on paramedics as well. The early Sullivan administration employed “rolling closures” – i.e., rotating short staffs and/or a truck. Bob asked whether this has happened in other communities? Eric explained that Fairbanks and Juneau already respond with two, and wait for backup.

Despite confusion about wording, “No” is a vote to repeal AO37. Peter Mjos noted that the main issue seems to be the elimination of binding arbitration in favor of the Mayor’s last best offer as the last word in negotiating contracts. AO37 in effect removes the negotiating process. Bob Churchill asked what are AFD response times? Eric said that AFD has a 30-40% survival rate responding to heart attacks, which is 10 times the national average.

C. Neighborhood Park Report Cards. Travis Smith addressed this issue. He noted that the Hillstrand Pond at Eastchester Park is halfway complete. He said there is an 8 page report card which takes a half hour to hour to complete. He encouraged

members to fill out the report cards for the Anchorage Park Foundation. The deadline is the end of October. The link doesn't work for the report card on the website. The Rasmusson Foundation will match funds for hours worked by volunteers on the park. Iris Mathews noted that the goal is to get MOA Parks to do improvements, but that volunteer efforts provide another way to get it done.

Iris noted that she is missing a small black cat with a pink collar, named Slinky. Slinky is chipped. Please let her know if you've seen her cat.

Diane Michalski introduced herself as new to the neighborhood and will be attending future community council meetings.

The meeting was then adjourned.