

Rogers Park Community Council Minutes

7 PM Monday, May 11, 2015

Rogers Park Elementary School Library

Board Members Attending:

Iris Matthews, President
Travis Smith, Vice-President
Jim Wright, Secretary
Treasurer (vacant)
Bob Churchill, FCC representative (absent)

I. Welcome.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. Members were asked to sign in to establish a quorum. 13 members were present at the outset, shy of a quorum.

II. Community Council Business.

Given the lack of a quorum, this item on the agenda was deferred.

III. Assembly Reports.

Assembly Member Elvi Gray-Jackson reported as follows:

- The Assembly held two Work Sessions on February 13th to receive a report on two SAP Audits (City's Financial and Human Resource Enterprise Plan). One was contracted by the Administration and the other contracted by the Assembly. Both contractors reported many issues with the implementation of the project. The Assembly's contractor provided recommendations on how to resolve the issues and informed the Assembly that the project is salvageable but at a cost. The Assembly's Auditor provided 120 recommendations to remedy the issues and the Administration accepted all but 11. The Administration is requesting an additional \$21.6M through a loan to continue with the implementation. The current project cost is \$35.6. The additional \$21.6 request does not include MOA labor.
- The Administration is proposing to reorganize the Public Works and Community Development departments. First Public Hearing was on March 24th, continued to the April 14th meeting, and finally continued to the May 12th meeting
- The Assembly approved the 1st Quarter Budget Revision resolution – Total Revised Budget: \$483,615,213.

- Chair Traini, Gray-Jackson and Honeman proposed public safety budget amendments as follows:
 - Funding within the Department of Health and Human Services for future use based on recommendations from the Assembly Committee on Alcohol and Drug Abuse - \$216,000
 - Homelessness Coordinator - \$129,720
 - Three Animal Control Officers - \$273,980
 - Senior Planner – Marijuana Land Use Regulations - \$115,880
- The total amount of amendments - \$735,580
- Cost to the Taxpayer on a \$300,000 home - \$6.33 Annually
- Assembly also set the Mill Levies as follows:
 - Anchorage School District – 6.84 Mills
 - General Government – 7.86 Mills
 - Total Mill Rate – 14.70
- Tax Bill on a \$300,000 home - \$4,410
 - After \$20,000 Residential Property Tax Exemption - \$4,116
 - After \$150,000 Tax Exemption for Senior Citizens/Disabled Veterans - \$2,205
 - After \$20,000 Residential Property Tax Exemption/Senior Citizens/Disabled Veterans - \$1,911

Next Assembly Meeting: May 12, 2015.

Elvi noted that the mayor vetoed the public safety amendments, referenced above, and took ~\$2 million from Solid Waste Services, apparently to further his goal to privatize that utility. Assembly Member Dick Traini noted that consumer rates will foreseeably rise if it is privatized. If it is run properly by the MOA/SWS, then it would make money. If we privatize it, then there will foreseeably be no alley pickup.

Jim Richardson added his opinion that recycling can be done profitably. Peter Mjos voiced his opinion that the lack of composting facilities also needs to change. Ann Loerber observed that services have been cut back already. The transfer stations is closed more. Elvi said this was related to Seward Highway traffic problems during road improvement work there. Ann noted that it has gone on for three years now.

Dick Traini discussed a pending proposal regarding the Fourth Avenue Theater, which he said is presently a fire trap in a state of deterioration. Developers propose to maintain the façade and build a two story building, but want a tax break to do it. The murals inside the theater have historical and art value, and can be preserved. It is also contemplated that the long empty and deteriorated Northern Lights Hotel be torn down.

Travis Smith asked whether the contemplated new development is to be commercial or residential? Dick said it would be mixed. The current owner of the Fourth Avenue property is Peach Investments. Tam Agosti-Gisler asked why they should get a \$20M credit? Dick said the effect would be to lock in the same payments they now make for the next ten years, without increase until then.

Peter Mjos asked whether the Assembly would try to override the mayor's veto of the public safety amendments? Dick and Elvi said they didn't have the votes. Instead, they would try to pass these steps when we have a new mayor in place.

Peter Mjos noted that we have a greenbelt trashed with homeless camps. Dick suggested that this situation would foreseeably improve with a new mayor, with different priorities.

Iris Matthews noted that code enforcement is limited due to staffing cuts. We as citizens can report concerns, but the responsible agency/ies are not responsive. Elvi responded that decreased taxes mean decreased services.

Jim Wright asked if there was any plan to fix or replace the bridge at Westchester Lagoon? Elvi said that no, it is not in the bond proposals.

II. Community Council Business (Continued)

With the late arrival of members there was now a quorum, and so this item on the agenda was recalled.

A. Approval of Minutes from April Meeting. Marilyn Pillifant moved to approve the April Minutes. Ann Lorber seconded. The Minutes were approved.

B. FCC Report. Bob Churchill, FCC Representative, was out of state and unable to present at this time.

C. Approval of Slate of Officers for 2015-16. The following persons offered to serve in the upcoming year: Iris Matthews, President; Clare Boersma, Vice President; Jim Wright, Secretary; Marilyn Pillifant, Treasurer; and Bob Churchill, FCC Representative.¹ Because there were no contested seats, Peter Mjos moved to elect the slate of candidates by a single vote. Jim Richardson seconded that motion. The motion passed with no nay votes cast.

IV. Legislative Reports.

Senator Berta Gardner explained that there has been no constituent meeting yet due to the prolonged, and stalled, legislative session. There has been a lengthy special session, but with nothing done despite key issues including the budget, Erin's Law, and Medicaid Expansion. The majority recessed, reportedly to consult with their constituents. However, there was little evidence that this occurred. The minority stayed in Juneau for

¹ The FCC Representative is not an elective position, but the choice of the current President.

several days, but could not move forward, being the minority. The plan is to return to Juneau tomorrow for a “technical session.” However, this is a waste of time and money, as what is contemplated is a mere gavel in and gavel out, required as a legal minimum every few days when the legislature is supposed to be in session. No substantive business will take place. Meanwhile, on Thursday there will be Democratic Caucus hearings to do what can be done by the minority.

Jim Richardson commented about a \$20M expenditure for the Agrium plant, which passed the House and is now in Senate Resources, but which Governor Walker may then veto. He opined that there is plenty of gas in Cook Inlet. Senator Gardner responded that the issue is the cost to extract it. Jim Richardson, himself an economist, disagreed.

Jim Wright inquired about the status of considering revenue sources beyond spending savings. There has been discussion of raising the oil tax floor. There has been some discussion of an income tax, notably by Republican Representative Paul Seaton of Homer, but Berta responded that his proposal is regressive. Rep. Harriet Drummond noted that Pat Pitney, the Governor’s budget advisor, pointed out to the legislature that the budget must include a revenue source to match the expenditures.

Jim Richardson said Alaska needs a board like Alberta has to manage oil and gas.

Ann Lorber expressed concern about the Juneau Road issue and related expense, noting that the Senate Finance Committee Chair’s husband² is a private beneficiary of that public expense.

Peter Mjos asked about the Bragaw Street (U-Med northern access proposal) extension status. Berta and Harriet responded that it might be dead given the scarcity of funds.

Rep. Harriet Drummond said that in Alaska we have a priority problem. School districts have to do pink slips in May. They don’t know what budget they will have, causing instability and the need to prepare for cuts. Tam Agosti-Gisler, Anchorage School Board member, said those discussions are going on at ASD even now. ASD expects to cut 70 positions. The literacy program to increase 3rd grade performance (before getting there) is cut. ASD has to do a balanced budget, even if the state legislature doesn’t.

Rep. Andy Josephson was not available to speak. Berta closed by asking our members to watch for invitations from the legislature to hearings and constituent meetings.

V. Presentations and Discussions:

A. Chester Creek Bike Trail Resurfacing. Maeve Nevins, MOA Parks & Recreation, presented. On Saturday, June 13, from 12-3, there will be a picnic and party, with music and games, to celebrate Park Founders Day, at the Park Strip at N Street.

² The reference is to Sen. Anna McKinnon of Eagle River.

Maeve described the Chester Creek Bike Trail Resurfacing Project (follow at <http://www.muni.org/Departments/parks/Pages/ChesterCreekImprovements2.aspx>).

Segment 1 construction, east of the New Seward Highway, is from May 26-July 30. Segment 2 construction, between New Seward and Arctic Blvd., is to occur from July 22-October 31. The trail will be closed during construction, although they may be able to open section by section as portions are completed. Davis Construction is the general contractor. Funding has been set aside for the Takishla Park spur. Permanent signage will be installed next year. The trail is to be 8 feet wide with 2 ½ foot shoulders.

Peter Mjos asked if root removal was part of the plan. The response was yes. Bob Butera asked if drainage issues were addressed. The response was yes, using French drains and ballast stone to allow flow with adequate weight-bearing material.

B. Bike Repair Station by Hillstrand Pond. It was anticipated that Jessica Smith, CRW for Parks & Recreation, would speak to this issue, but she was unable to appear. It was explained in general terms that bike repair stands are contemplated for the public, one to be mounted by Hillstrand Pond off Maplewood.

C. Merrill Field Helicopter Noise Protocol. Jim Richardson, RPCC member, presented a status report regarding progress working with Merrill Field about helicopter noise. Paul Bauer is the airport coordinator for the written “Fly Friendly” policy. Jim advises members to call 343-6301 if it appears that helicopters are not operating in a manner consistent with the written policy.

VI. Other Business & Announcements. All members were reminded to complete the CIP Survey on Rogers Park Projects, which helps our government representatives prioritize capital expenditures to reflect our stated preferences. The link to do that survey is <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2015RPCC>. The deadline is approximately one week away. Iris will send out reminders in coming days. Thanks to Heather Ireland and Ann Brooks for their annual work on this.

Les Sheppard asked to address the issue of tennis courts. He asked that we reconsider our past resolution against funding it. He notes that he is only seeking: 1) designation of the site, and 2) a sign. Travis Smith said he’d rather see that money go to schools. Les said the university district agreed to reconsider, and that no money is being sought yet. Elvi thanked him for his tenacity. She said she had met with the mayor on this issue today. The mayor tried to get covers on the tennis courts at East High. He represented that the Anchorage Community Development Commission agreed to put \$800,000 of public funds on this project, suggesting that Les had committed \$200,000 on it if it will be named after Les’ wife. Les denied any such commitment. Marilyn _____ noted her understanding that the Parks Department says the location won’t be approved in any event. Les asked if the members have seen the East High plan, saying it is mostly for baseball, with no heat or other amenities. Iris indicated there was no longer a quorum present, so no motion to reconsider could be entertained at this time.

RPCC member Bruce Merrill asked to be heard, to alert members that mail has recently been stolen on both sides of Northern Lights Blvd. Packages were found on the bike trail near 26th and Woodside. Outgoing mail had been stolen, as reported to the Anchorage Police Department. Tam, Clare, Iris and Jim all noted that the issue should be reported to the US Postal Service, as it is a federal issue.

Peter Mjos asked if we could be made aware of the survey results, once it is completed. Iris responded, yes.

The meeting was then adjourned at 8:31 p.m.