

# **Rogers Park Community Council Minutes**

## **7 PM Monday, September 14, 2015**

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

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

Iris Matthews, President  
Claire Boersma, Vice-President  
Jim Wright, Secretary  
Marilyn Pillifant, Treasurer

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. Members were asked to sign in to establish a quorum.

#### **II. Community Council Business.**

**A. Minutes:** Minutes from the May meeting were not ready for review, so this item will be taken up next month.

**B. FCC Report.** FCC representative Bob Churchill is officiating at a family wedding in Washington. He will bring us up to date on FCC business in the future.

**C. Treasurer's Report.** Marilyn Pillifant has obtained the necessary information to change the account, as required by the passing of Cheryl Forrest and to add new officers on the account. The balance remains as before.

**D. Introducing Nora Morse, special assistant to the Mayor.** Iris Matthews introduced Nora Morse, special assistant in the Mayor's office, who is assigned to Rogers Park Community Council, among several other community councils. Nora referenced two press releases in handout form: 1) the Mayor's Transition Report addressing 60 day goals, 6 month goals, and 3 year goals; and 2) the kickoff of Welcoming Anchorage Week, recognizing and highlighting the contributions of immigrants and refugees. Nora's contact telephone is (907) 343-7102.

Nora also noted that there are many current vacancies on municipal boards and commissions, and distributed an application form. She encouraged attending citizens to consider applying. Tam Agosti-Gisler asked whether the Youth Commission is to be restarted? Nora indicated it is. Jim Richardson noted that Campbell Tract is not designated as parkland, and he wishes to see that occur.

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

Assembly member Elvi Gray-Jackson introduced her assistant Rene \_\_\_\_\_. Elvi reported as follows:

- The Berkowitz administration has put a “pause” on the MOA’s Enterprise Resource Plan aka SAP for four to six weeks while a review occurs led by the new Deputy CFO – Alden Thern – and several industry knowledgeable members of the public. A report should be available prior to the end of September.
- The Public Hearing on the Equal Rights Ordinance will be held on September 15<sup>th</sup> after 6:00 p.m. in the Assembly Chambers. Assembly Member Flynn and Evans will introduce a joint substitute version.
- The Administration has provided the Assembly with the 120 Day Preliminary 2016 Budget information. Some highlights are:
  - An overall decrease of \$12.4M in revenues - \$8.6M in changes in Program Fees, Interest and other revenues, which includes a \$7M reduction of ML&P’s Utility Revenue Distribution due to the RCA’s decision and a decrease of \$4.8M in State Revenue Distribution.
  - Tax Cap Calculation – Limit on all property taxes that can be collected is up by \$8.6M.
  - The Administration’s priorities are public safety, facilitating new community development, and promoting more accessible and affordable housing.
- In terms of reorganizations for the 2016 budget, the proposed changes follows:
  - Office of Economic and Community Development – Development Services, Planning, Real Estate, Parks and Recreation, and the Library,
  - Public Works will be absorbed through the elevation to Department level – Traffic, Maintenance and Operations, and Project Management and Engineering.
- Proposed Capital Improvement Budget Bonds:
  - Fire - \$2M
  - Parks and Recreation - \$4M
  - Police - \$3.1M
  - Public Transportation - \$600K
  - Public Works – \$49M
- TOTAL BONDS PROPOSAL FOR 2016 - \$58.7M
- Chair Traini and Vice-Chair Gray-Jackson brought First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move! Program to Anchorage in February 2014. The Task Force has been

working monthly to reach Bronze, Silver and Gold Medals in all five goals. On August 21<sup>st</sup>, Anchorage reached that Goal and the First Lady of the United States aka FLOTUS has invited Anchorage to join 53 other cities to the White House for a reception on September 16<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 – 3:30. Elvi Gray-Jackson and Alden Thern will represent Anchorage at this event, and Elvi will introduce the First Lady at that event.

Next Assembly Meeting: September 15, 2015.

Assembly Chair Dick Traini noted that there are three proposed ordinances on equal rights now pending before the Assembly: one by member Evans; one by member Flynn; and a joint proposal submitted by both. At the upcoming hearing to take public testimony, each speaker will be given three minutes to testify. Each should be prepared to identify themselves by name and neighborhood before providing opinions. If all cannot speak that night then there will be continuation scheduled. He expects to proceed expeditiously and without disruptions.

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

Senator Berta Gardner opened by noting that she represents a district extending generally from East High to West High, and that the legislators are very busy after summer. A Special Session to address the gasline was anticipated, but the parties to it were not ready and so that appears to be deferred. Sen. Gardner is concerned about the pending theory that all co-owners, including the producers and the State, will be on an equal footing as regarding the gasline. This seems untrue, as TransCanada is the only one guaranteed a profit. Another concern is that as it stands, if any party withdraws, then progress stops without penalty to the spoiler. Exxon-Mobil is unhappy with Governor Walker for approaching Japanese interests about the gasline. This seems unwarranted. The Governor should be exploring options for the good of Alaska.

Sen. Gardner has been going to classes and conferences regarding energy education and education. She notes that Alaska Common Ground will be presenting a forum on fiscal issues facing Alaska on Saturday, September 19, 2015. There is a need to build a statewide consensus about how to balance our budget and meet our needs.

On October 2-4 there is a health fair, along with the Sullivan Arena's Make it Alaska Fair. Sen. Gardner encouraged all to attend.

The MOA's new Berkowitz administration is currently looking at the Northern Access/UMed road project. Sen. Gardner has provided our RPCC resolutions regarding this issue as part of this examination. There was also some discussion of the ongoing concerns relative to homeless camps.

Ann Loerber noted that she'd heard that money was put back into big road projects at the end of the legislative session. Sen. Gardner explained that the Governor froze many such projects, but allowed some funding to avoid triggering an arguable obligation to repay

federal funding previously advanced. This included concerns about the Knik Arm Bridge and Wautana Dam projects, among others.

One attendee expressed concerns about the proposed 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue interchange (36<sup>th</sup> and New Seward Highway), that it would overburden LaTouche. He felt that Shawn Holland, the project manager, was giving distorted information to the public. Sen. Gardner indicated that: 1) that intersection as unimproved is a dangerous place, as shown by traffic studies; and 2) that proposed project repairs are also of concern. Iris Matthews noted that our best information is that this project is only at the 30% design phase with funding presently stalled. Sen. Gardner noted that capital improvements priorities are focused on health and safety. Helen Selodchik asked if we can have another public meeting to again urge our position?

Karen Ruud asked if we can focus on homeless camps. Iris Matthews expected this to be addressed along with other of the Mayor's priorities in a future meeting.

Dave Morgan asked Sen. Gardner if she is proposing a buyout of TransCanada? Sen. Gardner noted that TransCanada is a good company with a record of meeting budgets and deadlines. A buyout is one option to be considered, but she personally has not committed to it at this stage.

Rep. Andy Josephson commented on the last legislative session, noting that the regular session was very busy but the special session was strange and needs fixing. Because a ¾ vote was needed to draw funds from the Constitutional Budget Reserve, Andy's caucus was able to hold out for greater funding for priorities such as the University system, social workers, and to fully fund the Base Student Allocation (but without increase). The Parnell administration had entered certain contracts, which required funding. So public employees got a 3% increase. The legislature presented the Governor with a \$30M discrepancy between revenue and expenditures, telling Governor Walker to go find the \$30M difference. The Office of Management & Budget (OMB) said it could perhaps come up with \$13-14M. We could not get Medicaid expansion through the legislature, so Governor Walker found the authority to do it. The majority hired lawyers and sued him. There are two classes of issue: 1) statutory interpretation; and 2) constitutional separation of powers. The latter is a bit murky. In any event, through 2017 there is no cost to the State for Medicaid expansion. After that, we'll see.

It is clear that we cannot cut our way to a balanced budget. Andy wants the majority to define their plan to balance the budget, as a plan is necessary now.

Regarding tensions with Exxon, there are disputes over the projected pipe size and over who will buy the gas. Andy favors a buyout of TransCanada. He feels Alaska would make billions more without them, but would lose their expertise. Sen. Gardner noted, however, that we can probably contract with them to provide their expertise.

Andy recommends viewing the Assembly's plan regarding the Northern Access road to and through U-Med.

Ann Loerber asked about expected cuts in legislative research. She foresees that this will result in research being done by those with special interests or agendas. Andy agrees mostly, but notes that the researchers were paid quite a lot. When pushed to make cuts, the legislature recognized this could be done for less money. Andy favors cutting credits to the oil companies. He explained that the Governor properly deferred them, which helps for now.

At this juncture Marilyn Pillifant raised a point of order, inquiring about the identity of a man who was video recording the meeting. The man identified himself as Dave Morgan, a former president of the community council. He argued that he is entitled to do that – i.e., recording legislators speaking in a public meeting. He represented that he is doing so for himself.

Dave Morgan noted that oil prices are forecast to drop to \$38 per barrel, and asked Andy what is his plan to meet Alaska's fiscal situation, noting the upcoming Alaska Common Ground meeting on September 19<sup>th</sup>. Andy responded that the September 19<sup>th</sup> presentation is not "D-Day" but is a good opportunity to address options. He said he'd like to hear the majority position because the majority has made clear that it will not consider plans posed by those in the minority. Cliff Groh recently wrote about the bad effect of excessive cutting on our economy. The majority's approach is making the situation worse rather than better.

Jim Richardson thanked Andy for his informative articles in the newspaper, and asked Iris Matthews if the board could consider banning recording of meetings?

Ann Loerber asked if we can soon have a constituent meeting? Sen. Gardner asked for a show of hands of those interested in attending a near-term constituent meeting. She noted there appeared to be a consensus in favor, and inquired when would be best. Sen. Gardner further noted that Alaska paid \$634 million more in credits to oil companies than it took in from oil tax revenues. This is not sustainable. Dave Morgan sought to debate or question further, but Iris called the group to return to proceed with the agenda given the time.

Rep. Harriet Drummond said she was embarrassed for the legislature's conduct during the last session, referencing the many meetings scheduled and then cancelled, inconveniencing constituents who relied on the scheduling. She noted that her caucus was able to restore \$2 million for preschools. She is troubled by cuts to public safety, including decreased enforcement of traffic laws on the Seward Highway and decreased funding for cold case investigations. She noted that the opposition to Erin's Law and Bree's Law was misplaced, and she was pleased to see these measures pass. She favors Medicaid expansion.

Andy Varner expressed concern about the lawsuit against State reimbursement of local school bonds. Sen. Gardner, known to support public education, noted we are in a cash flow crisis. There is unfairness in failing to reimburse as in the past, but there is also

unfairness that larger communities such as Anchorage can do what smaller communities cannot do. Berta wants education money spent on kids, not on buildings, she said.

Tam Agosti-Gisler, of the Anchorage School Board, noted that the Anchorage School District is hard pressed about how to meet needs and priorities. Buildings are in disrepair, presenting safety issues. So that cannot be ignored.

Tam also noted that reports indicate that certain scores dropped. But different standards were adopted, so that this year is the baseline data. Helen Nienheuser suggested the need to educate local journalists so that they understand this.

The legislative reports being completed, Iris checked for a quorum before commencing presentations. There were 26 members identified in attendance, as well as many others at the meeting. A quorum was evident.

## **V. Presentations & Discussions.**

**A. GCI/AWN Cell Phone Tower Proposal.** Nick Miller of GCI introduced himself and spoke about a proposal for dual purpose utility poles designed to avoid dedicating new cell phone towers. Customer-reported troubles with cell phone signal are heavily clustered in the RPCC district. While customers could get signal outside, it is weak enough that this calls tend to fail indoors, where there is an estimated 15Db less signal. To remedy this problem GCI proposes mounting cell phone extensions onto existing utility poles, starting along the alley paralleling the Northern Lights bike path. They are focused on an existing pole of 32 feet, which will be extended to 79 feet with the cell phone antennae on the top. In context, the pole to the west is ~55 feet, and the pole to the east is ~65 feet. The cell phone antennae constitute 3 feet six inches in diameter. GCI has considered an alternate site a bit to the west.

As part of its due diligence, GCI explored alternative sites at the Baptist Church, the NANA building, and four other locations. None were as favorable as the one proposed.

Multiple schematics were presented to illustrate options, comparables, coverage and relative signal strengths.

Jim Richardson asked how far the proposed pole is from the nearest building? Nick Miller viewed a survey showing the layout. The MOA requires 2x the length of the pole for a fall zone. That is ~159+ feet. Jim Richardson remarked that the proposed antenna is ugly and just 40 feet from the nearest building. Iris asked whether camouflage was being considered? Nick said they would paint it brown, but that efforts such as making it look like a tree were not being considered and had not been adopted locally.

Elvi Gray-Jackson noted that Amy Dembowski and Pete Peterson are working on an ordinance to address these concerns for Assembly consideration.

One attendee expressed concerns about wind. Helen Selodchik asked if lighting was being considered, and coordination with Merrill Field and/or the FAA? Nick said no lighting was contemplated. Dave Morgan asked if such poles ever fall? Nick said that he was worked with them since 1995 in Anchorage and had never had one fall.

One attendee asked if there was published data showing a public need for this pole/cell phone antennae extension? Nick responded that GCI perceives both a Rogers Park need and larger community needs. It is seeking input from us to adjust permit requests as feasible. Construction is not expected before next spring.

Berta Gardner noted that she switched to GCI to support the local company, but could not get a signal in her house, so had to switch back. GCI attorney Becky Woodhouse noted that she is working on this and the proposal is favored as a better alternative than separate cell tower poles. Jim Richardson noted that the area has favored undergrounding utility lines. Nick responded that if Municipal Light & Power goes underground, then GCI will have to abandon the pole.

Philip Blanchett noted that he works from home. He needs good communications for both his work and his family. He encourages the proposed pole. Iris noted that others had e-mailed her their support for the pole. She said that anyone can e-mail her with further questions or comments. Nick asked for a straw poll with regard to the GCI proposed concept. That vote was 9 in favor, and 4 opposed, with others not expressing an opinion at this time.

**B. St. Mark Lutheran Church Parking Lot.** Sheli Dodson, Secretary of the Church Council, spoke to the group about parking lot use at the Lutheran Church at 3230 Lake Otis Drive, across from Lake Otis Elementary School. The church wants to be good neighbors, so they seek the community council's feedback. Medical Park Family Care clinic approached the church to rent spaces in the church lot, with a shuttle service to the clinic. This went on for several years, providing some revenue. There was a complaint from a neighbor, which led to the discovery that this historic use violated regulations governing a nonprofit entity. Sen. Gardner noted that the clinic can presumably donate rather than contract for payments. Sheli noted that the parking lot has also reportedly been used for drug transactions, with shots fired. This is obviously not authorized, and no one is at the church at such hours.

Tam Agosti-Gisler noted that she has been 24 years a neighbor of the church and never observed any such issues. She is near the intersection of Duke and Stanford. Sheli noted that the issue is reportedly at the other end of the church premises, toward Wendler Middle School, nearer Cornell and Stanford.

Dave Morgan noted that he lives nearby, and has for 15 years. He has not seen such problems. He suggests alerting APD for more frequent visits at night, which should tend to discourage criminal activity there. Iris asked if anyone was aware of such issues there? One attendee said she lived there and observed no problems. Ann Loerber simply noted that sometimes Cornell is a bit congested.

**C. Northern Access Road to U-Med District.** Diane Evans proposed a resolution, a written copy of which was distributed, opposing the project. It was noted that despite multiple past resolutions from RPCC and other effected community councils, this project has moved forward. Dave Evans moved to adopt the resolution. Marilyn Pillifant seconded. The votes were 18 yeas, 0 nays, and 2 abstentions. The resolution passed.

Jim Richardson commented that the project was ill-advised and should be dropped. Dave Evans noted that the resolution addresses what the Planning & Zoning Commission can do.

**D. Merrill Field Helicopter Noise Update.** Jim Richardson presented. He said that despite a past understanding, two helicopter companies are ignoring that understanding. Paul Bauer, manager at Merrill Field, had agreed to encourage use of an alternate field for touch and go maneuvers at certain times. That is not always occurring. We are invited to an annual meeting to address this.

## **VI. Other Business & Announcements.**

**A. Rogers Park Elementary School Fundraiser: Septemberfest.** Germaine from the PTA reminded the group that on September 26 there is a fundraiser at the Petroleum Club between 6 and 10 p.m., with mixers, appetizers, and a silent auction. For details see the Rogers Park Elementary School website. Germaine's e-mail is displayed on the website should folks have questions. Iris went last year and said it was a great event for education.

**B. Chester Creek Trail Update.** RPCC President Iris Matthews presented. This project is supposed to be done in October.

Bob Butera asked if we can address the 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue/Highway upgrade in the near future, and can we have the DOT there to answer questions? Iris said she would check on the status of the project first. Sen. Gardner said she would assist by getting status and funding information to us.

The meeting was then adjourned.