

**Rogers Park Community Council Minutes**  
**7 PM Monday, January 11, 2016**  
**Rogers Park Elementary School Library**

**Board Members Attending:**

Iris Matthews, President  
Clare Boersma, Vice-President  
Jim Wright, Secretary  
Marilyn Pillifant, Treasurer  
Bob Churchill, FCC Representative

**I. Welcome.**

The meeting was called to order by Iris Matthews. A quorum was apparent.

**II. Community Council Business.**

**A. Minutes:** Minutes from the December 2015 meeting were reviewed. Bob Churchill moved to approve them. Pete Mjos seconded. Approved with no nays.

**B. FCC Report.** FCC representative Bob Churchill summarized the last FCC meeting. Mayor Berkowitz spoke regarding homelessness. Government Hill is doing a community garden. Amanda Moser, City Clerk, spoke about voting by mail. There are ~229,000 voters in Anchorage. Voting by mail has been tried in other states, by other cities. A marijuana group, AMIA, did a presentation, saying that commercial marijuana will be very good for tourism.

**C. Treasurer's Report.** Treasurer Marilyn Pillifant has not received a recent balance from the bank. Prior reports indicate that RPCC funds total ~\$202.

**III. Assembly Reports.**

Assembly member Dick Traini indicated that a 5% tax on marijuana is contemplated by the Assembly, with 2% increases each year up to 12%. The MOA will appoint a "marijuana czar" to oversee marijuana businesses, which must be licensed, and subject to a separate land use permit for appropriate locations. There will be a public hearing on January 26<sup>th</sup> that will address this. As part of the process an applicant will be made to come to the community councils for input. Dick asks that RPCC have summer activity in order to provide input as needed.

Several bonds are contemplated, involving fire and police, as well as \$49,255,000 for ASD. This year we must assume 100% local pay, without state participation, unlike prior years.

Following up on the purchase of the Waldron Lake site, Waldron Park is to be dedicated as such by the Assembly, another issue coming up at the public hearing on January 26<sup>th</sup>.

Assembly member Elvi Gray-Jackson is absent due to a health issue.

Iris asked for volunteers to serve on a marijuana committee, including summer activity. Dick said to expect notices of marijuana applications like we now get for liquor license applications.

Jim Wright asked if MOA's contemplated tax on marijuana is comparable to a tax on liquor. Dick responded that a municipal liquor tax is pre-empted by the State, but that is not the case as to marijuana.

#### **IV. Anchorage School Board Report.**

Bettye Davis, school board representative for our area, addressed the budget and the search for a new superintendant to replace Ed Graff.

There will be a budget shortfall if the State does not fully fund the schools. The issue is up in the air during the legislative session. Governor Walker favors full funding, but would remove preschool funding. The federal government funds preschool in Title I (which does not apply to all students). Kindergarten is required by law, but not preschool. Bettye favors State funding of preschools generally. She wants an early commitment from the State on school funding, so that the schools can plan. ASD is trying to avoid cutting teachers, as has been done in the last four years.

Turning to the school superintendant search, Karen Ruud asked why the school board (ASD) has laid off Mr. Graff. Bettye noted that there are seven members on the ASD and that it takes just four votes to pass a motion. This was done in executive session, so she is barred from saying more in response to the particular question. She encourages public input, noting that very few e-mails she has seen favored letting him go. Mr. Graff's contract expires in March, but he has agreed to stay to June during the transition to a new school superintendant. Bettye notes that expenses of \$25-80 thousand should be expected to hire a search contractor.

Ann Lorber noted the history that past searches have resulted in a mismatch, with chosen superintendants not lasting long or meeting expectations. Pete Mjos noted that the local community supports Mr. Graff, and that the only explanation given the public has been that his lobbying for money was weak. Bettye did not disagree, and noted that Mr. Graff was not hired as a lobbyist. Pete pressed the issue, asking why, what is the board looking for, and whether Mr. Graff is an eligible candidate? Bettye said she didn't know if he is or is not, but encouraged all to weigh in, press their questions in the course of the public meetings, and let their views be known.

Bettye said that public meetings to address the issue will be held tomorrow and beyond, the dates appearing on the ASD website. Again, she encourages public input to let members' views be known.

## **V. Legislative Reports.**

Samantha Strauss spoke for Sen. Berta Gardner. Berta reacted to the downgrading of Alaska's credit rating, by underscoring the need for cooperation, planning, and working to balance the State budget. The legislature needs input from the public. We can't wait to act.

She noted Berta's opinion piece in the Alaska Dispatch News favoring citizen activism that led to Waldron Park.

Ann Lorber expressed thanks for the constituent meeting held just before the legislative session.

Pete Mjos cited Cliff Groh's one page summary of the fiscal situation with favor, and said it should be part of the RPCC website. Mr. Groh is with Alaska Common Ground.

Other legislators were not present, due to the start of the session.

## **VI. Presentations and Discussions.**

**A. Municipal Plans To Address Homelessness.** Nancy Burke, the MOA Homelessness Coordinator, spoke. Her background is with the State Mental Health Trust Authority, on loan to MOA to address homelessness here. Lloyd Pendleton of Utah formulated a plan there, which she favors. Utah reportedly reduced homelessness by 95%. Applying a similar formulation Vermont reduced homelessness by 55%. Both states are like Alaska – more remote with less populous big cities, so hopefully this is a better model for us than has been followed by large urban centers.

We have a housing problem. \$359,000 is the average house price here. \$200,000+ is the average for condos. Generally, 30% of one's income should be available for housing, but more than that is needed for most incomes in Alaska. Beyond housing, the biggest assistance needed is 1) utilities, and 2) food.

We have a tight housing market. There are few vacancies, resulting in high rents and deposits. People with disabilities then fall outside of available housing opportunities.

First, the MOA plans to work with housing providers to make more housing available, but this part of their work will take more than five years to plan and implement.

Second, the MOA plans to work with social service providers to deal with "in-the-minute" needs. They initially plan to canvas in winter to count the homes and inquire why they are in that situation. That work will commence shortly.

Third, the MOA plans to work with employment resources, developing mentor businesses and organizations.

They are not seeking new money yet, but will need that support in the future. Rent is too high in Anchorage. They are looking into a new financing mechanism, in the form of social investment bonding. No new money is to be expected from the State, so financing will be sought from business and tribal sources.

They are gearing up for summer. The MOA wants trail use to be comfortable for users. But for now, the canvassing process will require volunteers. There will be a training day on Martin Luther King Day, January 18, followed by a homeless count on January 27. This will tell us where the homeless sites are.

Pete Mjos noted that in the past Ed O’Neal proposed semi-permanent camps, and asked whether that approach is still being pursued. Ms. Burke responded that such camps raise problems and require patrolling. They are not presently part of the Mayor’s plan. She believes that housing is the solution, and the camps approach is merely a bandaid. Ann Lorber noted that the housing priority will be expensive, and that, perversely, offenders have been placed first, rewarding outrageous behaviors. Ms. Burke acknowledged that there is a vulnerability focus, and underscored the need to look behind the bad conduct to the underlying problems that cause it – health care and addiction issues. She agreed that this reward system sometimes prompts bad behavior, noting the example of increased spice use.

Samantha Strauss asked how the public can provide information. Ms. Burke asks that we e-mail her at [BurkeNI@muni.org](mailto:BurkeNI@muni.org).

Bob Williams asked about the role and function of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, and how lands in its purview are used. Ms. Burke referred him to the Department of Natural Resources.

Dave Morgan had a question about social investment bonds. He noted that Governor Walker cut bonds by \$300 million, yet would increase arbitrage bonds to pay for pensions. He felt this was problematic because the money to pay for the bonds must still be there. Ms. Burke said the federal program is called “Pay For Success” if he wished to research it further. She was unable to address the bonding questions of Mr. Morgan, as there are as yet no bonding proposals for homelessness.

Iris interjected that the issue could be raised when a specific bonding proposal is raised. She noted that past work on homeless campsites was somewhat disconnected. She asked how is that changing? Ms. Burke said police responses to citizen calls have prompted involvement. Iris asked if we should still contact police regarding campsites. Ms. Burke said yes, and that she hoped for improved responsiveness, as it will take at least two years to develop new housing units.

Pete Mjos noted the example of Ballard, part of Seattle, Washington, where they have semi-permanent camps. He described the experience there as self-policed, with social service people on-site, and very successful.

Ann Lorber noted that the Mayor requested parkland from the State to devote to the homeless issue. Dick Traini said it was 32 parcels. He did not know enough about what land was requested to address it further.

**B. GCI Plans For Dual Use Cell Phone Tower in Rogers Park.** The primary speaker was Travis Drake, project manager for GCI's Wireless Department. The presentation was a follow-up to a prior presentation about a proposed dual-purpose utility pole – Rogers Park co-location at Galewood and the alley running parallel to Northern Lights Blvd. He introduced the team members present: Sherri Greenfields, Becky Wynn Pierson, KC Santos, and Mark Shaw.

Mr. Drake presented visuals illustrating: the proposed service improvement area, comprised of Rogers Park north of Northern Lights Blvd; and past and present comparative signal strength (receiving), noting that there is very bad or no coverage indoors for consumers in this area. Since the last presentation GCI placed a cell site atop the CH2M Hill building, which improved signals but left some weakness in the subject area.

Jim Wright asked whether College Village was still considered a problem area. Mr. Drake said there was no change in focus since the September 2015 presentation, although he was not present then. Becky acknowledged that they then addressed a larger area but that the focus of concern remains the same. Jim Wright pressed whether the GCI team could address College Village needs tonight, or is that beyond their scope. The answer was not responsive.

Mr. Drake next presented a slide illustrating measured interference from other sources, which causes dropped calls, poor reception, and other problems.

Jim Wright asked him to identify “other sources” causing this interference. Mr. Drake responded that the interference is caused by GCI's own six competing sites. Mr. Santos explained that cell phones seek a dominant tower. Here there are multiple towers competing for dominance, so that GCI wishes to build a tower closer to the problem area to dominate the signal there.

Carl Ward asked them to identify the location of the competing sites. The answer was not responsive.

Jim Wright asked whether the proposed new antenna in Rogers Park will then compete with the new antenna atop the CH2M Hill building, causing interference within College Village, which lies between the two. The answer was not responsive.

Jean Ward, who lives at or very near the proposed new tower, advocated for small cell technology, saying she is willing to pay more for less obtrusive antennae. Mr. Drake responded that GCI is trying to improve service to its consumers by replacing a 35 foot pole with a 90 foot pole, 79 feet being above ground. He said the wood pole would match other wood poles so as to minimize visual impact. Small cells would require more units and fiber optic cable to them, ripping up yards.

Brian \_\_\_\_\_ asked if GCI has tried to optimize by adjusting the existing antennae. The answer was not responsive. Brian pressed the question again. Mr. Santos responded that they've tried to optimize the signal by adjusting the antenna on the CH2M Hill building. Mr. Drake said the other antennae are fixed and will not be adjusted.

Marilyn Hauser asked why GCI had not used the new building CIRI erected where the old Fireweed Theater was. Mr. Drake said the site was not as good.

Dave Evans asked that GCI explain the difference in frequency used by GCI and ATT. Mr. Drake said ATT needs only about half as many towers.

Dave Morgan asked what is the difference in cost between this technology and the small cell technology. Mr. Drake said he did not have that information.

Karen \_\_\_\_\_ asked whether GCI had considered using the LDS Church on Maplewood, or contacted them. Mr. Drake said the signal was not as good – that it was too low.

Annette Cartier noted that in 2012 RPCC passed three resolutions against cell towers, and in 2015 passed two resolutions against cell towers. Other community councils have passed similar resolutions opposing the proliferation of obtrusive cell towers. She further noted that on February 1<sup>st</sup> the Planning & Zoning Commission will be addressing the proposed cell tower ordinance.

At 9:15 p.m. the meeting was adjourned.