

**Eklutna Valley Community Council**  
**February 3, 2016**  
**Meeting minutes**

The meeting was chaired by council president Rick Sinnott and began at 7:05 p.m. The council met at the new Eklutna ranger station. Sixteen council members attended: Debbie and Steve Thon, Deb Rix, Margan Grover, Dan Thompson, Randy Bangerter, Glen and Mary Keller, Bob Reagan, Cindy and Bob McElroy, Helen Bohn, Steve and Cheryl Remme, and Lisa and Rick Sinnott. Anchorage School Board member Elisa Snelling also attended.

The minutes of the October 14, 2015, meeting were approved with no changes. Lisa reported \$466.64 in the council's funds.

**School board news.** Elisa Snelling talked to the members about the budget and other school board news. Her main item was the \$49 million in school bonds scheduled for a vote in April. The ASD's website provides a list of all the projects (<http://www.asdk12.org/bonds/>). Elisa welcomed questions and comments. Her phone number is 223-5963 and email is [snelling\\_elisa@asdk12.org](mailto:snelling_elisa@asdk12.org).

**School bus service.** On December 7, 2015, Rick wrote a letter from the community council, as discussed in last October's meeting, requesting that Anchorage School District reinstate school bus service in Eklutna Valley. The ASD suspended service about 12 years ago due to low numbers of students and a concern over road safety after Eklutna Lake Road was paved. The letter estimated approximately 15 children live, or will soon reside, above the AWWU water treatment plant. Some of them aren't old enough for school, but they will be in a few years.

Chuck Moore, ASD's director of transportation services, responded on January 26. He and Dan Merrigan, routing supervisor, and John Miller, senior safety officer, had driven Eklutna Lake Road on December 16. Mr. Moore noted that school buses are much more difficult to drive than passenger vehicles. His main concerns were "the steep grades, narrow road width that requires buses to encroach into the opposing lane of traffic while loading or unloading, steep embankments with little or no space for passenger loading, and lack of recovery area in the event that the bus should lose traction." He said the road was poorly maintained, and they observed vehicle tracks in the snow "encroaching dangerously into the opposing lanes on many corners above the water treatment facility," because "the local residents treat the road as one way traffic." Finally, he noted that according to ASD records "only 3 students on Eklutna Lake Rd attend ASD schools."

He denied our request and recommended that students catch the bus at the Thunderbird Falls parking area.

After reading Mr. Moore's letter a spirited discussion ensued, despite the fact that only one parent at the meeting had children enrolled in the ASD. Margan Grover pointed out that Mr. Moore was counting only the children whose addresses were "Eklutna Lake Road" and not those living in the subdivision. Someone else had observed school buses driving the road on field trips. Randy Bangerter said he had asked the Anchorage Police Department for accident records on Eklutna Lake Road, but hadn't received them yet.

The hope is that, despite the road's obvious shortcomings, it is no more dangerous than some roads with school bus service, such as Hiland Road.

Council members believed we should respond to Mr. Moore's letter, correcting his misunderstandings and asking him what exactly he would require to find the road safe for school buses. We could then attempt to engage the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOTPF) in solving the problem or submit a transportation funding request to the Alaska Legislature for road improvements. Of course, some of Mr. Moore's concerns – for example, the steep grade and narrow surface – are irresolvable with the present road. Helen Bohn said she wouldn't allow her three children to use a school bus at any rate. At least one family home-schools its kids and another family's kids are only up here half the time. So even if we were able to convince ADOTPF to spend hundreds of thousands (or millions) of dollars on road safety, which is unlikely given the state's current budget woes, we might still fail to meet the ASD's minimum number of children on the route.

**Cell tower.** As discussed at our October meeting, Rick wrote a letter to Mike Felix, president of AT&T Alaska on January 16, asking his company to consider locating a cell tower in upper Eklutna Valley. We have few residents, but many thousands of park visitors would use their cell phones if coverage is provided. No response yet.

**Mail boxes.** Another issue that came up at last October's meeting was mailboxes. Currently, some residents use mailboxes located on Glacier Loop Road north of the Eklutna overpass. Deb Rix had volunteered to look into what was needed to relocate the mailboxes to the bottom of Eklutna Lake Road and upgrade to metal locking boxes.

She told members that cost depended on how many households want to participate. The metal units would cost about \$143 per unit for 24 boxes and \$110 per unit for 32 boxes. Shipping is included in the price. The boxes are lockable. They have a slot for outgoing mail and parcel lockers. The mailboxes would be located at the bottom of Eklutna Lake Road. Most members present expressed an interest in obtaining a box.

The next step is to determine how many community council members are willing to participate. Rick agreed to poll all council members in a separate email. Once we have a figure, we will meet with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to show them the mailboxes we plan to use and the number of units.

Installing the units will cost extra, but several members have volunteered to dig the holes and secure the bases in concrete. The council's funds could help defray the cost of installation, if members vote to use it for that purpose. However, the funds may also be needed if several boxes aren't claimed when the units are installed.

**Update on marijuana ordinance.** At the time of the meeting, the Anchorage Assembly was in the final throes of approving an ordinance for commercial marijuana facilities. Rick reviewed the provisions of the ordinance, particularly those most pertinent to Eklutna Valley, as follows:

- Marijuana can be grown and used personally in all zoning districts.
- Marijuana for owner's personal use cannot be grown in a commercial marijuana establishment.
- If marijuana is grown, processed, distributed or sold for commercial use, the

establishment must meet certain criteria, including a detailed site plan, notification at community council meeting, and Assembly approval.

- Marijuana establishments are prohibited in all residential zoning districts.
- Marijuana establishments shall not be allowed on a lot that contains a residential use other than a caretaker's residence.
- Marijuana cultivation facilities are permitted in the B-3 district, the only non-residential zoning category in upper Eklutna Valley, only when collocated with and attached to a marijuana retail sales establishment.
- Marijuana manufacturing facilities that only manufacture edibles are permitted in a B-3 district.
- The owner/operator of a marijuana retail establishment must meaningfully engage in neighborhood responsibility planning with residents and other neighborhood businesses to mitigate concerns such as odor, parking, and security.

In accordance with the ordinance requirements, our community council will hold a special meeting, with 21-days notice, to allow anyone planning a commercial marijuana facility an opportunity to share their plans with community members before the application is filed. We will also be prepared to meet either in person or electronically within the 21-day review period for Anchorage Assembly permit hearings.

**Resolution in support of removing the lower Eklutna River dam and restoring water in the river for salmon.** Randy Bangerter raised this issue before the meeting and Rick drafted a resolution in case the council voted in favor of it. Bob Reagan recommended postponing a vote on the resolution until he asked someone from Anchorage Municipal Light and Power to attend and discuss the issue with us. ML&P is the principal owner of the water in Eklutna Lake. The discussion took place before a motion had been made, so the members agreed unanimously to postpone a motion until the ML&P representative is invited to speak. Rick volunteered to ask someone involved in the dam's removal to come to the same meeting.

**Representation on Chugiak-Eagle River Advisory Board.** The CER advisory board considers revisions to the Chugiak-Eagle River section of Title 21, the municipality's land use ordinances, and other major land use issues and advises the Anchorage Assembly. Rick has served as our community council's unofficial representative on this board for about a year. The municipality asked us to vote for an official representative. Bob Reagan volunteered to participate, a motion was made and seconded to vote, the vote was unanimous, and Bob is now our representative.

The meeting adjourned at about 9:10 p.m.