

Rogers Park Community Council Minutes

7 PM Monday, September 8, 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. There was a quorum with 19 members present (1 more arriving immediately after the count).

II. Minutes: May 2014.

The May 2014 Minutes were lost as part of a flooding event at the Secretary's home.

III. Assembly Reports.

Assembly member Elvi Gray-Jackson presented, as follows:

- AO 37 - Ballot Proposition No. 1 will be included during the State election on November 4th.
- Mayor has provided the Assembly with his preliminary budget as required by Municipal Code. Highlights follow:
 - \$4 - \$6M budget shortfall.
 - Departments were requested to decrease budgets by 1%.
 - Although some departments have requested increases, the Mayor's budget should balance.
 - Additional \$3.1M that can be collected in taxes.
 - Overall, Mayor's 2015 budget "is targeted at reducing the growth in spending while minimizing service impact to the citizens."
- Mayor has to submit General Government and Utility Operating and Capital budgets to the Assembly by October 1st.
- Work Sessions will be held during October (dates TBA).

- Public Hearings will be held in November (dates TBA).
- The Assembly has a renewed Budget/Finance Committee chaired by Assembly Member Gray-Jackson. Members include Peterson, Steele, Demboski, Evans, and Hall. The Committee has a Work Plan with 12 purposes and a copy can be found on line. The Committee meets the third Thursday of each month from 12:00 – 1:00 in City Hall, Room 155.
- The Assembly launched an Ad Hoc Committee on Alcohol and Substance Abuse. The mission is to “work with Municipal agencies, nonprofits, and private sector entities to identify cause and effect of alcohol and drug abuse amongst chronically homeless citizens. Analyses will include mental health issues, overall impact on municipal resources and the private sector, educational programs and funding sources to seek solutions with the goal of making Anchorage the model city for dealing with the problems associated with the chronically homeless.” The Committee is chaired by Assembly Member Evans. Members include Assembly Members Demboski, Gray-Jackson, and Petersen. Committee meets the 1st Thursday of each month from 11:00 – 1:00 in City Hall, Room 155.
- Chugach Access Plan public hearing – September 9th after 6:00 p.m. The Public Hearing will be continued to the meeting of September 23rd. The Assembly is also scheduling a Work Session TBA to discuss and review constituent recommended amendments. This action will enable an organized debate and amendment process (on the floor) prior to approval.

Next Assembly Meeting: September 9th

Assembly member Dick Traini reported that he had nothing to add, except that he and Elvi were wearing T-shirts that said: “Who you gonna call? Dick & Elvi.”

Members had questions for their assembly members. Jim Richardson expressed interest in rehabilitation of Hillstrandt Pond, near Eastridge, noting that prior efforts had been vetoed. There has been flooding at Valley of the Moon and Westchester Lagoon. Salmon come in there. Is there anything that can be done? Dick and Elvi suggested he call their aides, and that they may be able to find grant money to rehabilitate these water bodies.

Peter Mjos asked whether we (MOA) had a surplus last year and whether it carried over. Elvi noted that every year of the Sullivan administration the Mayor reports a budget deficit, and that every year it ends with a surplus. Pete, Elvi and Dick characterize the Mayor as disingenuous in this regard. Dick noted that there are not enough police on the streets, nor firemen available, nor EMTs. So we have to pay for overtime, overstressing the people on staff, which is a repeat of the approach used during the Fink administration. Bob Churchill noted his understanding that 375 is the minimum number of police officers for a city of this size, yet we have about 325.

Helen Selodjik said that public works are down, but nobody wants to pay for it. It's wrong to burden our children and grandchildren with debt.

Marilyn Pillifant addressed education. We've lost at least 70 teachers in the public schools, and more by attrition. Public services are essential to the health of our state and community.

Peter Mjos noted that Ed O'Neill (former owner of Brown Jug) was willing to support a designated camp for the homeless. Is that dead? Dick Traini said a Seattle church tried that, but dropped it. The problem was sexual abuse, alcohol abuse and drug abuse. Housing is available for the homeless, but without detox centers, which are very inadequate here, the residents are terminal. They are going there to die.

One member asked the status of the MOA software system. Is the end of expense in sight? Elvi said the contractor wanted more money. Dick expressed his view that there is not end while this mayor is in office.

IV. Legislative Reports.

Senator Berta Gardner simply noted that she is here and available for meetings with constituents and interest groups. She wished to keep her presentation brief in order to focus on the school district presentation.

Bob Churchill asked what role Berta plays regarding the National Guard sexual assault and discrimination investigation. Berta replied that she is monitoring the status and comparing Alaska's performance with other states. Bob felt it was ridiculous and insulting of Governor Parnell to blame the second in command. Berta's impression was that sexual assaults were properly investigated but the discipline end was not right. There appears to be a culture of protection benefiting bad actors. Dick Traini noted that the Governor could have terminated the adjutant general long ago. Berta's understanding is that the police were told the National Guard was handling it, so the police step away, resulting in a failure of due process to protect victims and punish wrongdoers.

Representative Andy Josephson said it has been a busy summer for him, attending a resources conference in Minneapolis, the national caucus of state legislators, visiting the Donlin Mine, the Fort Knox Mine, the Pebble development and the Wautana Dam site. He is currently in his office each day reviewing e-mails. He has pushed for bike safety legislation after Jeff Dusenberry's death on a bike.

Travis Smith asked Andy to explain what the Donlin Mine is. Andy said it is owned by aggressive Canadian developers. Previously a consortium of Berick and Nova Gold had left a huge remediation problem near Nome – a \$22 million problem. The Donlin gold mine doesn't threaten local fisheries, but is pretty ugly. The upside is jobs for local people, which is good. Travis asked if these are the folks who want a natural gas line? And won't that raise gas prices for us? Andy said we're 18 years into a natural gas line

project, and a large diameter gas line should be done by 2024. Bob Churchill asked why we would let them develop a new mine if the old one left a \$22 million mess? He asked Andy to please look into that.

Helen Selodjik asked if he is for or against the Watana Dam. Andy said he is currently against, due to fisheries protection concerns and because natural gas may moot out the demand. In any event we don't have the money for the project now. Helen asked him to talk to the old timers up there.

Peter Mjos spoke to the concern regarding attempts to preempt the public process through regulation by the DNR, creating special management areas. Andy agreed this is subverting the democratic process.

Representative Harriet Drummond noted that Donlin Mine would bring gas to the poorest part of the state. She wants them to share with the locals. They don't want to be a utility, but might be open to options. Donlin Mine is close to Crooked Creek but not on it. Addressing education, she wants to adequately fund it – to hold education harmless regardless of state budget issues.

Ann Lorber felt there had been a loss of focus on education at UAA. The dollar priority appears to be the sports complex and support of the shoot out while raising tuition and charging for parking and decreased internet availability.

At this point Iris Matthews moved the school board presentation forward.

VI. Presentations.

A. School Board Presentation by Tam Agosti-Gisler.

It has been a hard time for public education in Anchorage. There have been \$50 million in cuts, and approximately 500 positions cut, since she was elected to the board of the Anchorage School District.

The cost per student has risen from ~\$8,600 to \$13,048 in inflation-adjusted dollars.

It is misleading use of data to say we spend too much on education. The 1986 crash left education funding languishing thereafter. Meanwhile the surge in oil prices since ~2000 increased costs. Over 30 years the salaries of educators remain flat, but benefits cost much more. Not more benefits but more cost. There is an annual growth rate in costs exceeding 16%. Health care expense is the single largest driver for the whole state.

The *Molly Hootch* (*Tobeluk v. Lind*) and *Kasayulie* (*Kasayulie v. State*) cases require equal funding for rural and urban students.

ASD projects the loss of 223 positions in 2015-16, due to a \$22.5 million deficit projected if the legislature does not increase funding.

ASD projects the loss of 216 positions in 2016-17, due to a \$22.5 million deficit projected if the legislature does not increase funding.

ASD projects the loss of 276 positions in 2017-18, due to a \$29.8 million deficit projected if the legislature does not increase funding.

It is a myth that attrition doesn't count. The reality is that if we don't replace these people, then there is less staffing and less service, less resources for education.

Why haven't we used up the ASD savings account? We used \$1.5 million recently. We need a reserve fund in order to maintain our AAA bond rating, to guard against emergencies/contingencies.

Real education reform suggestions include: 1) less capital, more operations; 2) consolidating districts (Maine did this with more regional hubs); and 3) alternatives to a statewide health plan. HB 196 and SB 90 require enrollment in state health care. We favor a private/public consortium for more negotiating power.

District level efforts at reform include: 1) narrowing our focus; 2) teacher development and accountability (50% of student performance as part of a teacher's rating, push student growth rates rather than an arbitrary test score); 3) manage for operational efficiency; 4) invest in technology; and 5) negotiate fair and sustainable union contracts.

Marilyn Pillifant had extensive questions. She felt the present administration does not favor adequate education funding. Rep. Andy Josephson said that an omnibus education bill would have a uniform pay scale with regional differentials. Marilyn Pillifant and Tam Agosti-Gisler emphasized that increased cost of health care is not increased health care.

Tam asked the members to take away the following points. Ask yourself: 1) How do we attract and retain employees to want to live and educate their children in Anchorage and Alaska? 2) How should Alaskans address the high cost of health care in our state? And 3) How and where is the State going to reduce its overall operating budget as we wait for oil production to increase without balancing it on the back of education?

Bob Churchill asked about lawsuits in other states regarding inadequacy of education. He had heard that Washington State took a big hit in this regard. Tam said Washington and Wyoming are both examples of this trend. She noted that specialist health care in Alaska is sometimes 12x greater than Outside.

Ann Lorber asked about statistics for student populations. Tam said there are ~1,000 fewer students in ASD over the last two years, but they're expecting a slight increase. The student count at the end of September determines funding. The high rate of transient students (e.g., students coming in from the villages or elsewhere) is problematic. Helen Selodjik suggested a monthly count, but Tam said this was too complex.

B. AWWU Project Update, by Trevor at 646-5626.

The AWWU PRV (Pressure Regulating Valve) Vaults Rehabilitation Project involves seven locations in Anchorage and Girdwood. It is handled by CRW Design Engineers for AWWU. There are two PRV Vaults in our area – one at Maplewood and Northern Lights, and one at Cottonwood and 36th Avenue, which is obsolete and problematic. The latter vault will be abandoned but it requires excavation. This will involve no problems of water quality or pressure, but will involve adverse traffic impacts over a 2-3 week period. Traffic will be restricted into College Village at this intersection.

Helen Selodjik expressed frustration, noting that this area was dug up recently and many other times in the last 20 years. Don't the utilities coordinate? The presenters indicated that this work was unknown until the last year and entails a complex process to get funding. The process does not apparently lend itself to coordination of utilities projects.

Ann Lorber asked about the traffic pattern during work. Westbound traffic on 36th will be able to turn right into College Village, but eastbound traffic will be precluded.

Turning to the vault at Maplewood and Northern Lights, there will be a 2-3 week disruption of traffic on Northern Lights, which will involve closing the left turn lane onto Drake for westbound traffic, as well as the northernmost (inside) eastbound express lane on the east side of the intersection with Drake. There will be no water service impacts.

C. Merrill Field Helicopter Noise Report, by Jim Richardson.

Members had noted increased helicopter noise and traffic. Upon inquiry, this led to two helicopter schools with increased traffic focused from Merrill Field, with no real regulation. Paul Bauers at _____ and the FAA held a meeting to address concerns on May 19, which resulted in a memo on May 21st from Paul Bauers regarding what the helicopter schools were willing to do. Based on this process there was less noise this summer. Jim wanted to advise the group to be aware and provide feedback, providing Paul Bauer's contact information (_____), and to thank Elvi Gray-Jackson, who helped this process along. Round of applause.

D. 36th Avenue & Seward Highway Improvements, by Iris Matthews.

Bob Churchill and Janet Bidwell took part in a working group to address the project at 36th Avenue and the New Seward Highway. There was a meeting on August 27th which allowed for community council input into the project design. Tudor/Geneva Woods representatives were also there, concerned about transportation issues there. They presented noise data to address noise deadening concerns. It is at the 10% design phase and not funded as yet. This early meeting led to the recognition that the big problem is no planning for access to the neighborhoods from 36th Avenue, and diverting traffic to LaTouche has its problems. Increased noise from an elevated highway is a huge issue as well.

E. The Liquor License Application at Fireweed & Seward Highway.

A liquor license is the subject of a lottery to have occurred in July, but deferred to October. There are two applicants competing for that license – one in Mountain View and one at Fireweed and New Seward. The latter is across the street from the entrance into Rogers Park from the New Seward Highway. The applicants have made no contact with our community council, and there is concern that another liquor store in this area is a bad idea. A draft resolution in opposition to a new liquor store in this location is on the table. Bob Churchill moved that it be adopted. Marilyn Pillifant seconded that motion.

It was asked who owns the applicant. It appears to be a Chevron station. Bob Williams asked who represents the owners? The belief among some was that the Coffey law firm, emphasizing liquor licensing issues, represents them.

Whereupon the resolution was put to a vote. There were 24 in favor, 0 nays, and 1 abstaining. Rep. Harriet Drummond and Sen. Berta Gardner asked that we e-mail the resolution to the North Star and Midtown Community Councils.

V. The FCC Report, by Bob Churchill.

At the last FCC meeting Tam made the same basic presentation as we heard tonight, which was well received.

The FCC budget is due. Assembly needs it so that there is no lapse in funding. There have been complaints that the FCC staff has been providing a poor level of service. Options are to rebid the contract (that is, put it out to bid to other entities) or to assign it to staff at the MOA (in other words, take it in-house rather than to a separate entity). Assembly members Elvi and Dick support the FCC function. RPCC got its amended bylaws in as required, and was among the first to do so. Kudos to Darryl Hess for reading all of the old bylaws in preparation for new model bylaws, and for setting up community council officer training.

VII. Announcements.

A. Rogers Park PTA Septemberfest.

Germaine Thomas, the face of Septemberfest, spoke. Rogers Park Elementary School is raising funds for interventionist tutoring. This includes a pullout to work on reading and writing. AimesWeb assessments showed improvement in those kids who received such help. There will be a silent auction. Tickets can be bought at Rogers Park School. Septemberfest will occur on September 27 at the Petroleum Club from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Two tickets are \$85. One ticket is \$50.

B. Chugach State Park Access Plan Coming Up.

This will likely occur on September 23.

C. Other Announcements.

Iris will post the Capital Improvements Survey results. She encourages all to consider what to include in the next annual survey.

We need to document crime in our neighborhoods. We can do it online. Resources are allocated to our neighborhoods based on reporting of crime issues. APD is thinly resourced, so we are in competition for those resources.

Helen Nienheuser noted that there is a group working in opposition to the Northern Access to the U-Med District, focusing on the Corps of Engineers permit. She emphasized that this project is not a done deal. Diane Evans is in a leadership role from our council district.

Peter Mjos offered kudos to Elvi Gray-Jackson for her role in Michele Obama's "Let's Move" initiative to fight childhood obesity through exercise, and Elvi for Pete's role in that project.

Treasurer's Report. Cheryl Forrest reported that the community council fund remains as before plus one cent.

The meeting was then adjourned.