

RUSSIAN JACK COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

6:30 PM, Wednesday, February 10, 2021

At Zion Lutheran Church – 2100 Boniface Parkway

Present: Ed Leach, Kathleen Plunkett, Dan & Sherry Wright

Present via ZOOM: Kendra Kloster, Renea Miller, Louis Imbriani, Fred McLeary, Lisa McGuire, Hedy & Teddy Eischeid, Ann Ooms, Emily Sobek

1. Meeting was called to order at 6:31 pm by Chair Kendra Kloster with a welcome and acknowledgement of Dena'ina Athabaskan lands. Roll call was taken to ensure all participants were included in our list of attendees.

2. Anchorage Police Report - no report provided

3. Legislative report (3 minutes each)

Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson (Keith Bauguess) no report.

Sen. Bill Wielechowski - Senate organized, House is still not organized. Budget subcommittees for all over the state. Extension Disaster Declaration may take place by the Senate (Governor not planning to extend it). Impact means certain consumer protections expire, ramifications on vaccine deployments, etc.

Sen. Tom Begich (provided by Brix Hahn) – Bill that will provide free tuition to essential workers (on the lower end of the economic scale) in order to thank them for keeping us going through this pandemic. Strong relationships between political parties in the Senate. Please email the Senator anytime at Sen.Tom.begich@akleg.gov

Sen. Begich joined later in the meeting and added to his staff's comments that he is disappointed in the Governor's action today and we should all be incensed.

Rep. Geran Tarr - Frustrated with lack of House organization. Public health emergency and declaration are main focus. She is concerned we will be creating a situation that causes health care workers to act illegally. Constituent meeting on Saturday link: <https://fb.me/e/4VULgs3eP>
She is working on updating the language for consent. Link to article: <https://www.alaskapublic.org/2021/02/10/law-change-needed-to-bring-more-rape-prosecutions-in-nome-and-across-the-state-some-experts-say/>

Rep. Ivy Spohnholz - Second session in a row that House has deadlocked on organizing the House. Expanded access to vaccinations for educators, child care providers, over 50 with health risks. We are about 200 million dollars in the red this year, even without a PFD this year. 95% of Alaska revenue used to come from oil. Now its about 25% from oil and 75% from Permanent Fund. If we continue to spend the PFD, we are essentially raising taxes on future generations.

Rep. Andy Josephson (Tristan Walsh) no report.

4. Assembly report (3 minutes each)

Pete Petersen - \$35 million available for rent/utility assistance through AHFC. Ordinance introduced to put the Emergency Orders into law. There was a large percentage of people

against that – doubt that will come back. Mask mandate is still important if you can't maintain 6 feet distance outside your home. Bond issues for the April ballot were discussed for MOA government that include opportunity for contractor bids. This is a great time to borrow while interest rates are low. Crime is down in all categories in Anchorage (over last four years trend). Believe 100 more officers on the street is working.

Forrest Dunbar – MOA is partnering with AHFC to provide one stop shopping for applicants for rent/utility assistance. Link is:

<https://www.cognitofirms.com/AlaskaHousing/AlaskaHousingRentReliefEligibilityPreRegistration>

Disaster Emergency Declaration was extended till mid-April and can re-evaluate at that time. Some of the ordinances that will help small businesses operate probably will pass. Plastic bag mandate was suspended until Emergency Order ends (through August 31st) to help stores use up their supply. Park bond included improvements for Russian Jack Springs Park. Tax levy for APD technology improvements is included.

Louis Imbriani – EO to AO amendment to modify “COVID-19” verbiage to cover future pandemic issues. Forrest responded how changes to upcoming EO's might be good permanent changes. Less burdensome verbiage will be likely made.

2nd question – comment about some people not wanting mask mandate / not wanting EO.

Assembly and mayor should be equal – mayor may be able to act more quickly and autonomously, but even if either enact there is a 60 day sunset clause, which in effect gives the mayor more power than intended.

5. School board report (3 minutes each) – Elisa Vakalis No school bond this year. Nurses and vaccines were discussed (moved up on the list) thank you! She provided the school board web page information.

6. FCC report – Kathleen Plunkett – MOA Assessor would be a good idea for a Council meeting to understand how they go through the process.

7. NeighborWorks – Lindsey Hajduk – Russian Jack impact measurement survey report - Block/Parcel observations and Resident survey that covered mostly the northern and western portion of Russian Jack Springs Community Council area. Want to know what matters to community members. Tracks neighborhood conditions over time, provides on the ground observations and online surveys that include satisfaction and sense of safety. 27 blocks were observed to include attractiveness, cleanliness, infrastructure & building conditions, parcel uses and vacant lots. Since 2013 the attractiveness improved from 43% to 88%. Cleanliness had significant improvement with all blocks observed with no or only some litter. Basically, most of the criteria in the area observed showed improvement. Building conditions had some decline. What resonates with your experience as a resident? What might explain this? Are there findings that stand out as important to address going forward?

Ed Leach comment – as residents remain in the area longer, they generally keep litter taken care of however; as a resident remains, they also may be more willing to allow some property upkeep to slip.

Online Resident survey – Population is younger, more diverse with a higher percentage of non-English speakers. People appreciate the parks and playgrounds, bike lanes and seeing more police presence. Most are satisfied and would recommend Russian Jack community to others.

Crime, gun shots, drugs, thefts, homeless, road issues – speeding, lack of sidewalks, not stopping for stop signs, roundabouts were some of the negative comments received.

Community safety was another topic that was under the survey – Various comments from those who have been here longer – know which areas to avoid and finding most neighbors fantastic.

Community participation – 50% of the respondents reported they were willing to volunteer in order to make a positive difference in the community, but not sure how to do that.

Perception of Public Services – primarily positive perceptions with the exception of police receiving only a “fair” rating. Fire, ambulance, trash collection were other areas.

Next steps is hearing from the broader community to finalize report findings and create a Russian Jack Community Leader Institute Team to create a community project. Funding will come from NeighborWorks America. Can partner with projects in Russian Jack Springs Park, if that is desired. Lindsey can be reached at: lhajduk@nwalaska.org

8. Review & Update Capital Improvements Project list Kendra sent out a map of MOA Road surface conditions and Lindsay provided a 2020 CIP list. Beth Nordlund is hoping to upgrade Polar Bear park and Kendra will drop ideas into a Google document for our review and additions.

Geran said in the past, MOA would identify projects and the Legislators would cover the design phase on these projects, but there was a lack of follow up on year 2 or 3. Smaller projects that could be fully funded with state dollars, is another option to remember when considering projects. We should put all ideas on the list and then rank them next month. Kendra is looking for ideas from the Council members. Projects can be added to the Google Doc Kendra created (link provided below). Road projects, sidewalk needs, trails, schools are all areas that would be considered. A couple of ideas from the meeting: Pedestrian and bike access from Pine Street. Lane & San Roberto is a huge intersection for children after school. Repaving access at the end of E 20th next to Russian Jack Elementary School.

Google docs link:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_aqxonkHfAzEh7HYKX9RUIXNi8eoljEU2lcqTY_3UI/edit?usp=sharing

9. Mayoral and school board candidates introduction (indicates which they are a candidate for) Candidates were given 3 minutes each to share what they wanted with the council.

George Martinez – (Mayor) – He has met many in our group as special assistant to Mayor Berkowitz. Was a University professor. Vision to bring people together, cutting down toxic partisanship for a safe, connected community. Resetting public safety – strengthening community relations. Focused on bringing back economy – renovation, infrastructure.

Downtown Design District home to Seed Lab (extension of the Anchorage Museum). Thanks. george2021.com / 907-406-8907 / text George to 33339

Alisha Hilde – (School Board seat E) Wants to improve education for kids. Middle school band teacher and then went to law. Active in the community, asking parents on playgrounds how things are going and hear from them. Elementary age children. Focus on long term financial planning, retention of teachers, hitting academic expectations. Multi-year bonds helps manage energy toward academics. 80% reading proficiency for children to realize better outcomes throughout their schooling. Passionate about doing school board well. Thanks. alishahilde.com Please call or text with any questions! 720-1060

Carl Jacobs – (School Board seat G) Foster parents that have served 40 children. Investigator for HSS. Bring positive changes for children. Budget year after year – equity in our district. (907)632-7285, Carl@Carl4Anchorage.com, or my website: <https://www.carl4anchorage.com> .

Heather Herndon – (Mayor) Background in construction/development. 4th Generation - Long time Anchorage resident. West High graduate. Wants to see people get back to work. Crime increases when people get desperate. Veteran housing is one of her platforms. 3 part solution to homelessness – veterans (military land), ICF blocks. Helped moved the Native hospital. She has experience with military and business groups. Desires to bring new business to Anchorage. Real careers is her goal. Thanks for your time. Man hole cover on Bragaw & 6th Avenue would be a good fix. Herndon For Mayor 200 W 34th Ave, 544 99503 907-602-7180 Heather Herndon For Mayor hm_herndon@icloud.com

Elisa Vakis – (School board seat C) graduate of Bartlett. Running for her 3rd term. She brings experience, focus, getting kids life, college and career ready for the world. Innovation, now more than ever to meet kids where they are. They need different things – working on solutions. Mission is to educate all students. She has the heart, passion and drive to continue another three years. Thanks. 907-223-5963 or email at elisa.vakis@gmail.com

Forrest Dunbar (Mayor) – many of you know me. We've built a great coalition, Women's March, crisis to recovery to long term growth. Resolving the COVID crisis and jump starting the city this summer. He has detailed info on his web site.

Kelly Lessons - (School board Seat B) 4 of the seats are up for election. Parent of 2 elementary school children. Has been working with the school and parents to advocate for equitable recess and lunch policies. Wellness Pilot launched last year. Learned a lot throughout that process. Listening to all constituents is important. Leadership matters. Student wellness, equity and learning. Thanks for opportunity. www.kelly4anchoragekids.com or email me at kelly@kelly4anchoragekids.com

Thanks to everyone that wants to run for office.

10. Neighborhood/Community Announcements

Here's an upcoming Mayoral Candidate forum focused on Parks, Trails, Climate & Economy next week: <https://www.facebook.com/events/791520654780295>

AMATS Non-motorized plan open house February 18th from 5 – 7 pm (info attached in documents). <https://www.facebook.com/events/243757683882636>

Next meeting is scheduled for March 10th at 6:30 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm

Minutes respectfully submitted by:
Sherry Wright, Secretary