

Bear Valley Community Council
Minutes – March 9, 2022

Call to Order, Announcements and Introductions

The regularly scheduled March 9, 2022 meeting of the Bear Valley Community Council (BVCC) was called to order by Council Chair Cheri Lipps at 7:03 pm. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the meeting was again held via Zoom videoconference. Guests in attendance included State Sen. Roger Holland, Assembly Member John Weddleton, Assembly Candidate Randy Sulte, JBER Liaison Joy Boston, Brice Wilbanks of Mayor Bronson's office, ASD Board Member Kelly Lessens and Bill Paganan of Carry the Cure, Inc. Chair Lipps noted that there were not enough BVCC members in attendance to constitute a quorum. The proposed March meeting agenda and the draft February meeting minutes were available in the Zoom chat section.

Guest Speaker

To efficiently use guest speakers' time, Chair Lipps invited Mr. Paganan to address the Council. Mr. Paganan is undertaking an effort to have the Alaska Historical Commission (the state entity responsible for geographic place names) change the names of North and South Suicide Peaks on the outskirts of Anchorage, as he believes these names are offensive and promote suicide. He and a group of other Alaska Native people propose the names Yuyanq' Ch'ex in their place, and have gathered statements in support from various public and private entities. Chair Lipps advised Mr. Paganan that due to the lack of a quorum, the BVCC was not able to vote on either supporting or declining to support his re-naming proposal.

Legislative, Assembly, School Board and JBER Updates

State Sen. Roger Holland updated attendees on senate activity, noting that the legislature anticipated having additional revenue due to the increased per-barrel price of oil. ANS crude is presently over \$100/barrel. He noted that his proposed bill, the Alaska Reads Act, would likely pass the senate. Sen. Holland also noted a transgender school sports participation bill has been proposed. He provided his contact information as 907-351-8277.

South Anchorage Assembly Representative John Weddleton provided an update on assembly matters, noting that re-apportionment (as re-districting is called at the Municipal level) is moving forward utilizing a compromise he proposed. A public hearing is scheduled for March 15 and a special meeting of the Assembly is scheduled for March 23. Mr. Weddleton also reported on Assembly action on homelessness, stating that a planned shelter with 200 beds and surge capacity for an additional 130 beds had been approved by the Assembly with support from the Mayor. He also reported on the recent favorable decision by the US Court of Federal Claims awarding \$367 million to the Port of Anchorage. A proposal on accessory dwelling units or so-called "mother-in-law units" is before the Assembly. Mr. Weddleton responded to a comment regarding increased real property assessments, stating that assessments increased an average of 8% but that this does not correlate to property tax increases, which by law are based on a formula reflecting population and inflation growth and are anticipated to increase by 1% this year.

JBER Community Liaison Joy Boston provided a JBER update, stating there is a multi-force, multi-national military exercise going on at present. She stated this is a long-planned exercise and is not in response to recent actions by Russia or North Korea. There will be a base readiness exercise occurring in late March through April 8. JBER will have a booth at the Great Alaska Sportsman's Show. There will be an unaccompanied veteran's memorial service next month, which the public can attend in order to honor deceased veterans who leave no next-of-kin able to attend.

Brice Wilbanks of Mayor Bronson's office spoke next, noting February is Women's History Month and providing dates for various commemorative events. He reminded attendees that March 15 is the application deadline for senior and veterans' property tax exemptions. He urged attendees to vote in the upcoming Municipal elections. Residents can vote by mail and in person, with in-person voting to begin March 28, with a voting deadline and mail-in ballot deadline of April 5. Ballot drop-box locations are also available throughout the municipality. Mr. Wilbanks also referenced the favorable court decision regarding the Port, noting however that the decision remains subject to appeal for roughly 45 days. BVCC Member Mr. Yankauskas expressed his concern that the Mayor has still not selected a qualified Library Director despite an extended vacancy.

ASD School Board member Kelly Lessens reported that the School Board has approved two collective bargaining agreements, with AEA (teachers' union) and with TOTEM (school district support personnel). Both agreements have already been approved by the respective unions. Teacher retention continues to be a challenge for ASD. The Board recently passed a budget for FY 23 (2022-2023 school year.) The District will receive \$78 million in federal Covid relief funds, the majority of which will be directed toward maintaining the District's pupil-teacher ratio. Ms. Lessens reports that the Anchorage Museum is hosting a K-12 student art show and that this is the 50th anniversary year for this show. ASD's superintendent search is well underway and the Board hopes to have a new superintendent hired by late April.

Randy Sulte, Assembly candidate for south Anchorage, spoke briefly and introduced himself to the attendees. He and Mr. Weddleton are each running for Assembly seat J.

BVCC Officer and Committee Reports

Chair Lipps invited officer and committee reports. BVCC Treasurer Angie Pinsonneault was not in attendance but has submitted a report reflecting that the BVCC checking account contains \$1,028, with no recent expenditures or contributions.

Assembly Liaison Jordan Wright provided a brief report, following up on Mr. Weddleton's remarks regarding the reapportionment process. Mr. Wright stated the Assembly was working on a jobs proposal. Mr. Weddleton interjected, noting that the proposal in question is not yet before the full Assembly and reflects work in progress by a portion of the Assembly.

Member-at-large Kori Marchowsky reported on the February Firewise resiliency meeting she attended and announced there will be a Firewise educational event on April 30 at Hilltop Ski Area. This even will provide valuable information to the community on fire prevention techniques. Ms. Marchowsky reported that Sr. Capt. Nick Davis is the new fire captain at AFD Station 10 (Mountain Air Dr next to Bear Valley Elementary School) and that she is hopeful that he will be receptive to implementing Firewise strategies in Bear Valley.

Bill Ennis, Chair of the Bear Valley LRSA, spoke briefly and noted that his LRSA has not had significant overflow problems this winter, although the large volume of snow has presented challenges with keeping the roads sufficiently clear and wide.

Dave Lipps, Chair of the Rabbit Creek View/Heights LRSA, reported that his LRSA had issues with very narrow roads at present. He stated that he was working with their road service contractor to widen the roads.

Approval of Minutes of January Meeting

Chair Lipps called for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 2022 meeting (available in the chat) noting that there is now a quorum present. On motion and second (Ennis, D. Lipps), the minutes were approved with 7 of 8 attendees in favor.

Other Business and Adjournment

Chair Lipps asked if members had other items of business. Hearing none, she announced that the AFD Fire Chief was expected to be the guest speaker in April. The next regular meeting of the BVCC is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, April 11, 2022 at 7:00 pm via Zoom. Upon motion and second (D. Lipps, Livsey), the March 9, 2022 meeting of the BVCC was adjourned by unanimous consent at 8:14 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Constance Livsey
BVCC Secretary