

Bear Valley Community Council
Minutes – February 9, 2022

Call to Order, Announcements and Introductions

The regularly-scheduled February 9, 2022 meeting of the Bear Valley Community Council (BVCC) was called to order by Council Chair Cheri Lipps at 7:07 pm. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the meeting was held via Zoom videoconference with 10 members and several guests in attendance. Chair Lipps declared a quorum and invited attendees to review the agenda and draft November 2021 meeting minutes in the chat section of the Zoom call.

Chair Lipps introduced guests State Sen. Roger Holland, Matthew Harvey for State Rep. James Kaufman, Anchorage Assembly Chair Suzanne LaFrance, ASD Board Member Kelly Lessens, JBER Liaison Joy Boston and representatives of Anchorage Fire Dept Station 10. It was announced that Assembly Member John Weddleton was expected to join the meeting at 8 pm, and also that we would have a presentation by UAA Prof. Jen Schmidt regarding vegetation mapping and fire hazards.

Legislative, Assembly, School Board and JBER Updates

State Sen. Roger Holland provided an update on the Legislature's activities, including an education bill that he is hopeful will pass. He reminded attendees that his contact phone number is 907-351-8777 and invited calls regarding legislative matters.

Matthew Harvey provided a legislative update for Rep. Kaufman. Rep. Kaufman serves on the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee. Mr. Harvey reported on some intended uses for the federal infrastructure bill funding, including potentially Clarks Road drainage issues.

Assembly Chair LaFrance gave an update on Assembly actions and reminded attendees that the next regular meeting of the Assembly would be at 5:00 pm on Feb. 15, 2022. There are upcoming municipal elections on April 5, 2022, and information regarding the election is available on the www.anchoragevotes.com website. The site allows you to track the status of your municipal ballot. Ms. LaFrance briefly addressed municipal redistricting, including proposals to combine the Anchorage hillside with Eagle River. Ms. LaFrance stated she does not support that proposal. She also addressed the recent Anchorage home valuation assessments, noting these have increased but that this does not necessarily mean that taxes will increase by the same percentage. The deadline to file challenges to real property assessments is February 11, 2022.

Ms. Boston provided a JBER update and submitted additional information into the Zoom chat section. She noted that MOA property owners with a VA disability of 50% or greater are eligible for a real property tax exemption.

ASD School Board member Kelly Lessens reported on ASD issues, stating that Feb. 16 and 17 are Parent-Teacher Conference days, and that there was an upcoming charter schools fair event and lottery. The charter school lottery deadline is March 17, 2022. Ms. Lessens also stated that the search for a new ASD Superintendent is underway, with an application deadline of Feb. 21, 2022. ASD and AEA (the teachers' union) have reached a tentative collective bargaining agreement, with a vote expected soon by AEA. Ms. Lessens also reported on the school district budgeting process and stated a budget meeting (open to the public) was scheduled for Feb. 22, 2022. The District has approved a bond package in the amount of \$111 million, which will be up for voter approval on the April 2022 ballot. Ms. Lessens explained that the bond package encompasses 31 projects at 25 separate school sites, many of which have become urgent due to deferred maintenance. Other projects included in the bond package address re-roofing needs, seismic renovations, secure vestibules in elementary schools and replacement of Inlet View

Elementary School, which is presently beyond its original life expectancy. Ms. Lessens advocated for passage of the bond proposition.

Guest Speaker

BVCC Board Member-at-Large Kori Marchowsky introduced guest speaker Jen Schmidt, Ph.D., UAA Ass't Professor at ISER, to discuss her recent efforts in fuel modelling within the Municipality and particularly the Anchorage hillside. Prof. Schmidt noted that hemlock trees, which we have throughout Bear Valley, are considerably less flammable than spruce trees. She provided wildfire risk assessment maps in the Zoom chat feature and discussed wildfire exposure and mitigation measures that individual property owners can undertake, such as creating defensible space around dwellings, cleaning gutters, and limbing spruce trees to a height of 6–8 ft above ground. Prof. Schmidt also discussed the Firewise program (see, www.nfpa.org.)

BVCC Chair Cheri Lipps then introduced guest speaker Ann Rappoport, co-chair of the Rabbit Creek Community Council. Ms. Rappoport addressed an RCCC project to create and identify safe, non-motorized routes to schools that can be used by walkers, bikers or skiers to reach area schools such as Goldenview Middle School and Bear Valley Elementary. She noted there are currently no off-street walking routes to these schools. Ms. Rappoport explained the project is intended to use existing, public access spaces such as easements that could be minimally improved via placement of gravel or wood chips and enhancement of drainage. Ms. Rappoport requested a letter of support from Bear Valley CC to Rabbit Creek CC for the concept of the project. Ms. Rappoport provided her contact information as 907-230-3187 or RabbitCreekCC@gmail.com.

BVCC Chair Lipps opened the topic for discussion. Some potential easements and informal walking paths within Bear Valley were discussed for suitability for accessing Bear Valley Elementary. Ms. Lipps and BVCC member Verne Pomraning expressed concern regarding wildlife threats to walkers throughout Bear Valley, especially in non-winter months. Attendees discussed informal usage of one potential footpath along a continuation of Jamie Ave and the consensus was that members had serious safety-related reservations due to the heavily wooded nature of the path and the high potential for adverse wildlife encounters.

At this point, Assembly member John Weddleton joined the meeting.

BVCC Officer and Committee Reports

Chair Lipps requested Officer and Committee reports, noting that BVCC does not presently have a HALO representative. BVCC Treasurer Angie Pinsonneault provided a report, stating that the BVCC checking account still contains slightly more than \$1,000, with no recent expenditures or contributions.

Member-at-Large and Assembly Liaison Jordan Wright provided a brief report on recent Assembly activities, noting that reapportionment of Assembly districts was underway. Mr. Wright noted that one recent proposal being considered placed the hillside area, including Bear Valley, with Eagle River, which he did not feel was appropriate and which was not supported by our south Anchorage Assembly members. Mr. Wright urged members to contact our Assembly representatives John Weddleton and Suzanne LaFrance for more information or to voice opinions.

Chair Lipps turned the floor over to Assembly Member John Weddleton to give his Assembly report. Mr. Weddleton addressed the redistricting efforts and stated that he strongly favored keeping the entire hillside area together since it shares common and unique concerns, and state that he does not favor combining the hillside with Eagle River. He stated he would be advocating for maintain districts made up of cohesive and contiguous neighborhoods.

Mr. Weddleton also provided an update on the ongoing work of the Assembly and the MOA administration to address our homeless population and transition away from use of the Sullivan Arena as a mass care homeless shelter. He reported that the MOA is partnered with the Rasmussen Foundation, CIRI, Doyon and other funding sources to purchase multiple sites, including the Sockeye Inn and the Barrett Inn, to provide various levels of housing and transitional services. Mr. Weddleton referenced the extensive negotiations and public hearings that have resulted in the plan to which the Assembly, administration and funding sources have agreed, and stated he feels very positive about the progress that has been made.

Approval of Minutes of October Meeting

Chair Lipps requested approval of the minutes of the November 2021 meeting (available in the chat.) Upon motion/second (Pomraning/Pinsonneault), the minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

LRSA Updates

RCVH LRSA Chair Verne Pomraning stated that he has requested their service provider to widen the roads since the last few heavy snowfalls have resulted in the roads being too narrow to facilitate garbage pick-up.

Bear Valley LRSA Chair Bill Ennis provided a similar report for the BV LRSA, stating that he has also requested the roads be plowed out wider, particularly in the Snow Bear / Black Bear area where visibility and maneuvering are limited after recent snowfalls.

Other Business and Adjournment

Chair Lipps asked if any members had other items of business. Hearing none, she announced that the next regular meeting of the BVCC would take place on Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 7:00 pm via Zoom. Upon motion and second (Livsey, Pinsonneault), the February 9, 2022 meeting of the BVCC adjourned at 8:42 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Constance Livsey
BVCC Secretary