

## RUSSIAN JACK COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

6:30 PM, Wednesday, October 12, 2022

At Zion Lutheran Church – 2100 Boniface Parkway

Present: Ed Leach, Kathleen Plunkett, Tammy Hanson, Lori Pickett, Andrew Gray, Carl Battreal, Dan & Sherry Wright

Present via ZOOM: Lindsey Hajduk, Kendra Kloster, Keelin Baughman, Ted Eischeid, Maya Narang, Genevieve Mina

Meeting was called to order at 6:33 pm by President Kendra Kloster.

1. Welcome and Land Acknowledgement We are meeting on Dena'ina Land – grateful for their care and sharing the land with us. Received a call that public was not comfortable at the last meeting due to some racist comments and so did not return. This is a community space and we want everyone to feel comfortable attending the meetings. Comments about unhoused public discussion made it uncomfortable and consider if our conversation was kind, helpful. We need to be thoughtful and respectful. Lori felt responsible for not doing her part to run a better meeting. Ed spoke that the homeless are not one group – one common answer doesn't apply to everyone. If we don't discuss the sub-groups, we will not find solutions. Lori stated she would say in the future that a comment didn't feel comfortable, this isn't the place for that discussion and we need to stay focused on the agenda. One who stated homeless were in her backyard came to seek help from the council on how to address it, so her comment was not perceived as racial, but as discussing a problem. Kendra said multiple community members felt the same thing. Sherry asked a few questions of how to move forward. Kendra or whoever is running the meeting will make a point to speak up and keep order. We should be able to share our views, but being respectful. It is best to address the issue of disrespectful comments when they occur. Kathleen also mentioned the fact that having hybrid meetings makes it more difficult and awkward to address the issue. Pete Petersen said the Assembly had an incident with someone that was speaking very racially, which also becomes a free speech issue, but the Assembly was similarly trying to figure out how to deal with it. Kathleen said that the FCC had a presentation on homeless – with cross cultural training. Daryl Hess is the ombudsman and can perhaps be a resource. The discussion led to anticipating more people attending. Wonder Park has a bigger space - Tammy Hanson will reach out to the IT Dept and see if there is conflict with having our council meeting with ZOOM and in person attendees. Ivy said we may consider reaching out to Immanuel Presbyterian (which is in Nunaka Valley). offered AK Literacy Project classroom, but would have to switch to 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday evenings. Will discuss potential meeting locations at the next meeting.

2. Anchorage Police/Fire Station Report - no report

3. Legislative report (3 minutes each)

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

Sen. Bill Wielechowski (Nate Graham) Talked about some of the other council meeting formats (hybrid or zoom). Not much going on – elections coming up. East High pool is now open. They are using it for swim team but need lifeguards. Gas prices spiked again - \$1.62 over the

national average. Bill sent a letter to Attorney General asking him to look into this. Closures in California refineries may have contributed, but actual costs here are irrelevant to that. Refining margins are high in Alaska and many constituents have asked about it.

Sen. Tom Begich (Trevor Bailly) - Early voting starts October 24<sup>th</sup>. Polling places have changed. Opioid Remediation is one of the committees Tom is working on. He leaves office in January and the report on what to do with any funds will be available then. \$58 million total is the amount of the grant. They consider setting up a trust for spending the funds. Tom is also on the Suicide Prevention council.

Rep. Geran Tarr API is more of a long term facility, which is why the Assembly is tasked with the local homeless population. There are continuing education budget discussions regarding timing of funding – for example March 15 rather than the pink slips going out in May for ASD. ISER, if engaged to do the study will take an estimated 3 years for the results. Low reading scores lead to less enthusiasm for additional funding. 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Restorative Justice summit coming up December 1 – 2. Poverty and Opportunity task force recommendations to continue to meet.

Rep. Ivy Spohnholz - PFD management had not adhered to its managing document (in regard to firing of CEO). Devon Mitchell is the new hire. There is discussion of PFD board being confirmed by the legislators. UMED issues AMATS transportation study – looking for feedback from surrounding community. <https://www.destinationumedstudy.com/>

UACC homeless shelter being proposed on Tudor Road. Lindsey said that NeighborWorks Alaska has "Supportive Housing" program, where we help connect folks to housing all across Anchorage. <https://www.nwalaska.org/permanent-supportive-housing>

Rep. Andy Josephson (Tristan Walsh) – no report

#### 4. Assembly report (3 minutes each)

Pete Petersen – Appointment approvals included: Parks & Rec Michael Brandon; and head of OMB Courtney Peterson. Discussions about Golden Lion Hotel usage for homeless housing – not emergency, but semi-permanent. Whether its treatment or housing, it needs to be used. It is sitting empty. 85 rooms that already have bathrooms and some even have kitchenettes. May be able to house more than one person per room. Would provide shelter during the winter. Sullivan Arena is at or near capacity. Camps cannot be abated unless there is somewhere for people to go. 55 rooms in Alex Hotel in Spenard were also approved. 200 people are already housed in Aviator Hotel that will extend for awhile, but they want to remodel.

Forrest Dunbar – Is the Co-chair of budget committee – 1<sup>st</sup> meeting tomorrow. Mayor has given his proposed budget - \$583 million that they are starting to look through. Mobile Crisis team absorbed into APD. There will be enough revenue from alcohol that the Mobile Crisis team should be able to stay intact. No bonds for parks in East Anchorage. Funding for RJSP still unsure. Steve Rafuse has been active in trying to move forward with RJSP Master Plan. Forrest spoke to Robin Ward, who was property management (re: Golden Lion Hotel) said this building could be occupied relatively quickly. APD towing department received \$300,000. Beetle kill mitigation \$1,000,000. Fuel costs for various agencies and put money toward Sullivan Arena repairs. Polynesian Association of AK and Pacific Community of AK received ARPA #2 distribution after accidentally being overlooked in the earlier process.

Daniel Volland - Put forward a long range transportation plan in Anchorage, run through Municipal planning. Would include snow removal and right of way management. Documenting our values so we are ready for implementation. Opioid Remediation – settlement funds that come to Anchorage have pretty broad latitude – community needs assessment of the desired use of those funds. We don't have enough treatment centers in Anchorage, although we have a problem. Mental Health, Domestic Violence and Child abuse are other problems that arise or run in conjunction with the opioid problem. There was a question about expansion of API (capacity for 85). Staffing is an issue that limits capacity. Mental Health Trust is studying expansion. There was a discussion of the problem of looking at the homeless population from different viewpoints which creates some of delay of taking action. Guest House has capacity for 130, that are on a lease with ELI – extremely low income. 20 are for those with a higher income. Don't forget to celebrate what we do have. Downtown and Fairview CC have both signed letters in support of helping the homeless.

Dan Wright talked about the homeless camps and the benefit of having a place that is safe and can get people the help they need. It also allows Fire Department personnel to not return over and over to the same locations/people. The homeless are already all over Anchorage.

Kathleen asked about AHFC funding. Ed said one problem with the rental assistance program that prices out others from renting. Anchorage needs to build some 4-5 story apartment for low income housing (perhaps where Northway Mall currently sits). Converting vacant spaces to housing, as the Anchorage housing market is very tight.

Ted appreciates Assembly efforts. Desire to make Anchorage more bicycle and pedestrian safe. Changing parking lot requirements for businesses would also help. Assembly members are looking at reducing minimum parking requirements with the planning department.

5. School board report (3 minutes each) – Kelly Lessens – liaison to Student Community Board. Working on putting together birthday packages for other students in need. 2023-2024 budget \$68 million shortfall – they must submit a balanced budget, considering cost/benefit of each program. Immersion programs, shifting 6-8 for middle school students, night program restructuring, sport programs, ASD virtual are all items being considered to help balance the budget. Many positions remain unfilled in the ASD. Overview of April 2023 bond for \$37 million. East High improvements – ADA accessibility, sprinkler and more information will be provided on the bond. Recommendation for school closures (lack of funding, inflation and lack of enrollment are the catalyst for this discussion). Combining under-utilized schools will help with collaboration between teachers and students. Reports for progress for reading – including what constitutes proficiency are coming up. 1<sup>st</sup> graders made sizeable improvements.

Kathleen asked if they are looking at all the different school programs, for example People to Teacher Ratio (PTR)? Tutoring can get accelerated growth.

Link for school board updates [asdk12.org/fy24](https://asdk12.org/fy24)

6. FCC report – Kathleen Plunkett reported that there is an issue with using the internet or the phones if we switch to using a school. Diane Holmes from Rabbit Creek CC concerned about assessor dwelling unit ordinance through MOA.

7. Report from JBER Public Affairs – no report

8. Community Car Wash Project presentation - Tanner Brandt – postponed to November 9<sup>th</sup>.

9. Alaska Trails presentation on bike trails - Carl Battreal provided a presentation on the proposed Mountain Bike trail system for the Northern portion of Russian Jack Springs Park, which is intended to be used by beginner and intermediate mountain bikers. They have received a Challenge Grant and working on fundraising. A trail design was done in 2018 about 1.5 miles, but that length of a trail would most likely not be utilized. To make the trail appealing to youth it should be accessible from the paved paths. What is lacking in the city is a progressive style system that starts easy and gets progressively more difficult. Carl is also a Nordic ski coach, so he doesn't anticipate the trails interfering with skiers. They would take advantage of trails already in use by others.

Difference in Mountain bike is a narrower pass, rolling trails that make it more interesting. Estimated budget for this project is \$221,000 for 2.5 miles of trail. Would like to see this built next summer. YEP will be helping. Machine work on the roots will be the more expensive portion.

Sherry Wright asked if any of the current cross country ski trails are going to become mountain bike trails in that portion of the park? It is the area where the tunnel under DeBarr and between the paved trail section, utilizing some of the smaller trails within that section of the park, that would cross back and forth on the wider ski trails. There are many various user groups in the park and having more people using the trails does make it safer for everyone.

Ted – believes we can all enjoy using the park.

Lindsey – loves the idea of reaching out to the nearby schools or offering programming to get students out there. Bike Anchorage's GRIT program brings middle schoolers from Begich into RJSP each spring too. Would love to expose Mighty Bikes to Russian Jack area.

Ed said he wasn't sure about the skate park, but it runs smoothly.

Lori mentioned about the immigrant population is looking at different outdoor opportunities and ways for bike borrowing, multi-lingual information. Parks & Rec signage could be made multi-lingual. QR codes can be used to integrate language without the expense of adding a host of languages on every sign.

Kathleen Plunkett makes a motion to support the single-track mountain bike trails in RJSP north east section designated in the master plan. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed Leach. Passed 10 for, 0 against, 1 abstained due to lack of a clear idea where the trails will run.

10. Neighborhood/Community Announcements - Lindsey talked about the Community Gardens and continuing work on a Russian Jack community garden. Box tops for Wonder Park can be dropped off.

Genevieve Mina – running for Geran Tarr’s seat – west of Pine Street HD 19.  
alaskansforgenevieve.com 907-230-0411

Keelin Braughman – Mountain View Library! Storytime is every Tuesday at 6pm, join us for songs, games, and great books. Tomorrow, the 13th, an artist from the Anchorage Museum will be leading a Zine making class for all ages, 3pm. Finally for some spooky Halloween events: on the 21st, we will be hosting a kid-friendly movie afternoon at 3pm. On the 28th at 5pm, join us for a Trick or Treat and Read storytime for preschoolers, come in costume, enjoy some scary good books and get some special treats. On the 29th all day long, if you come to the library in costume, you can win an award and pick up some candy and treats. Feel free to call or email if you have any question or want to know more, keelin.baughman@anchorageak.gov or 343-2904.

Ted – Running for HD22. Education, infrastructure, safe community are three things he is running on. <https://tedforalaska.com> 907.215-0312

Kendra – CIP draft list review again November agenda to vote in December. Nominations will be in November, finalized in December.

Andrew Gray running for HD 20.

Lori Pickett has the Russian Jack planting party shirts available for anyone that would like one.

Next meeting is scheduled for November 9 at 6:30 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm

Minutes respectfully submitted by:  
Sherry Wright, Secretary