

Mid-Town Community Council Open Meeting Minutes
Located at 3000 C Street – Conference Room
Wednesday; February 8, 2023
12 Noon to 1:30 PM

MTCC Officers and Directors attending the meeting included: Kris Stoechner, Rosemary Borchardt, Ric Davidge, Al Tamagni, Megan Debenham, Greg McDonald and Bill Borchardt

Sign in and Call to Order – Kris Stoechner President

Kris called the meeting to order at 12:04 pm

Approval of Minutes: 1 Min

Ric moved and Rosemary seconded that the minutes be approved, and the vote to approve was unanimous.

Treasurer’s Report – Kirk Hastain - Treasurer - 2 Min

No report as Kirk wasn’t present. Kris noted that no activity has taken place. Al noted that there is still \$350 in the account.

Approval of Agenda: 1 Min

This was inadvertently skipped.

Resolution for Girdwood: We are neutral - 5 minutes

Kris reported that the board had voted to remain neutral, but it was a moot point because on 2/7/23 the Assembly voted to halt the project.

Committees:

Marijuana and Alcohol – Brian Swartzentruber & Rosemary Borchardt 5 Minutes

Kris provided a list of all new licenses and license renewals that have been reviewed by the committee.

Rosemary- the committee evaluated the package store license at the Old Romanos. There was no objection because it is not a typical package store. The committee doesn’t want any more traditional package stores in midtown.

Presenters:

Jim Renkert – Update on Midtown Park Chalet – 5 Minutes

Jim spoke on behalf of Anchorage Skates, the Anchorage Skate Club, and the coalition Friends of Midtown Park. They are bringing Olympian Shani Davis to Anchorage next week. Shani will skate at several public events as well as visit Mountain View Elementary School. (Flyers attached.)

The goal of this publicity is to broaden the demographic of skaters in Anchorage as well as raise support for the midtown park chalet. The chalet is part of the master plan of the park. Grass

roots fundraising efforts have begun, with over 100 people making contributions, including 16 Olympians. Also applying for an Atwood foundation grant and looking for corporate support.

Q: Ric asked if they need help in Juneau.

A: Yes!

Jim noted that the AEDC brought Rogers Brooks up last year. Roger reported on what Caldwell, Idaho did to turn their community around by building an ice skating ribbon downtown. Now the community is making money on ice skating rentals and concessions. The Friends of Midtown Park would like to see concessions and ice skating rentals at our chalet to provide revenue.

Q: Where is the location in the park?

A: NE corner of the oval, in a low spot of ground. Trail will go over the top of the chalet. RIM architects did the design. Jim can send the design to Kris for distribution.

Q: Concession/Rental operated by staff or volunteers?

A: Not volunteers. Staffing still being determined.

Assemblyman Felix Rivera - Mr. Rivera will provide a map showing all homeless shelters in the city of Anchorage - **15 Minutes**

Map of the Homeless Prevention Response System (HPRS) is not complete yet.

Port- Meg will talk more in March, but there are two main issues facing the assembly: The final design and how the city is going to pay for it.

1. Design- 2020 port design advisory committee, composed of users of the port, hasn't been able to reach a consensus. The design they propose is more extensive than anticipated and is estimated to cost \$250 million more than projected. The committee recommended two identical terminals.
2. Paying for it- biggest source of funding is through the port tariff. Anything additional we can get from the state or federal would be great, but tariff will be primary funding. The assembly has to investigate the mechanics of tariff and what the eventual expense will be for tax payers.

Bond issue- assembly approved yesterday a parks and recreation bond more extensive than the mayor proposed. The midtown chalet is in it along with lots of other good projects. Bond will be voted on as a special concurrent bond proposition election.

Online checkbook- assembly is working to approve something similar to the state's. The public can see municipal expenses item by item. The assembly also hopes to include contracts. Currently it can take months and cost a lot of money for the public to see contracts. Goal is for approval and implementation by Jan 1, 2024.

Body worn cameras- not too much of an update. Police going through vendor selection and hope to have a vendor approved by March. Implementation policy will enter arbitration in April, with a decision in the Fall. The State hopes to have a pilot program in April. APD has taken much longer.

Homelessness- Assembly appropriation of \$4.6 million to continue sheltering at Sullivan Arena, Aviator Hotel, Covenant House, and one other location through end of April. Money to come solely from alcohol tax rather than a combination of health and human services money and the alcohol tax. Includes evaluation of food guidelines and operation of the Sullivan Arena. Demobilization plan- mayor will present Wed, Feb 15. All current facilities will shut down end of April because low temperature trigger will no longer be met. Right now 600 individuals are being housed.

Q: Ric- growing problem with hemp?

A: Hemp and marijuana have two different regulatory schemes. Hemp isn't regulated. Don't have to follow any packaging regulations. There are loopholes for age restrictions, so minors can buy retail. Hemp can be created to be more intoxicating than marijuana. The assembly passed a resolution yesterday asking the State to start regulating hemp.

Q: Al- Will the checkbook include the assembly?

A: Yes

Q: Al - How many employees does assembly have?

A: Felix doesn't know the figure, but the number of employees has been growing. There used to be more employees in the early 2000s.

A: (Provided at end of meeting) Assembly branch has 38 staff positions, including 12 assembly members. Clerk's office, council's office, ombudsman, legislative services. Legislative services is the only department 100% dedicated to the Assembly.

Q: Al - How many homeless clients in Anchorage?

A: Felix- you can find in that information in the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH) data portal. It is thousands of individuals.

A: (Provided at end of meeting) Total number touching system: 10,013 in HPRS system. Probably around 3000 consistently homeless.

Q: (asked at end of meeting) Melinda Gant- would hate to see parks used as outdoor shelters again this summer. Decimated Anchorage's reputation for tourism. Roger Brooks commented. Has the Assembly considered creating a policy for usage of outdoor homeless shelters? Any protections that can be put in place?

A: This is tricky since the Administration never called Centennial Park a homelessness response center. Felix has asked the Administration twice if Centennial Park will be used again. Personally, opposes using parks, unless it can be done in a structured way.

Other Assembly reports – Rivera, Zaletel, Constant & Volland – 5 Minutes

Mayor's office – 5 Minutes

Girls Scouts of Alaska – 10 minutes

Alexis and Olivia presented:

Cookies - will be sold in March
Camp- just opened to public, all over Alaska. Camp open house May 16.
Troop locations - meet at Loussac and several schools near midtown.
Volunteer - many ways to volunteer, including educating GS about your specialty.
Fundraising - "Empower Her" campaign is in April, designed for business sponsorship
Community Service - GS are here to help community. if we have a project they can help with, let leaders know girl scouts of Alaska council.

Q: Ric- age for GS?

A: Kindergarten through 12th grade

Q: Rosemary- website?

A: girlscoutsalaska.org email customercare@girlscouts.org

Margo Bellamy– School Board President – **15 Minutes**

Margo was unable to attend

Candidates running for School Board – 5 minutes each with questions at the end of presentations:

Irene Boll - School Board Seat C

Advocate for education. Prioritize public education and keeping public schools public.
Fundamental part of democracy. Every child access to preschool. Improve equity in community.
Unions are important. Play a critical role in supporting teachers and thus children.

Dave Donley - School Board Seat C

Dave was unable to attend

Andy Holleman - School Board Seat D

Started as mechanic, switched to education- Dimond, Service, Goldenview. It's been a rough couple of years driven by events. Strong belief in public education. Lot of people don't realize range of students in ASD. We do have problems with test scores. Class sizes too big. Trouble staffing. Difficult budget.

Small commercial- ballot referendum to divert marijuana tax for pre-k education. ASD doesn't have as many quality opportunities for children that other communities our size have.

Mark Anthony Cox - School Board Seat D

Product of ASD. There was a time in Anchorage that we were proficient. His two children are his motivation to run. Joined military after high school. Term "public school" is endearing, but it's still a government school. It would be great if we got results from the money we are spending. Has been asked how he would handle the budget? Too aggressive to throw out everything, we need a time of respite, but we also need to deal with issues. The ASD is a business, and our dollars need to be effective. Should subcontract some things like other businesses do.

Q: What decisions does the board make for ASD?

Q: Do school board members represent certain areas of Anchorage?

A: AH- School board selects superintendent, approves budget, sets policy. One of more equitable cities in country. Biggest concern is kids coming out of disadvantaged situations.

A: AH - All board seats are city wide. Having a couple more board seats might be good.

A: MAC- even if you don't have kids, you are funding education through property tax. Do you think you're getting back what you've put in? The school board sets guardrails, policy. MAC has background in finance.

A: IB- board represents entire city. Advocating for our district in Juneau is especially important. Our district is massively underfunded which was confirmed in report from UAA last year. We actually have less funding per student than almost anywhere else in the US. Ireneboll.com is her website.

Q: Mike Robbins- Do you believe that we are achieving our quality goals?

A: IB- no

A: AH-no

A: MAC- no

Q: Mike Robbins - Do you believe there is a money problem?

A: IB- yes

A: AH- yes

A: MAC- yes

Comment: AI- Tax payers fund ASD. Would like to see the school board take that into consideration more. Perspective from business community: ASD doesn't provide training for skilled labor. Why are we ignoring those things? Recommend that the school board create special committee composed of business people to promote trade school and hiring.

Comment: Ric- recommends book Success Academy, story of successful schools in NYC, even in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Ric's book, *What's Wrong with America's Education?* Will be published soon. Discovered 47.6% appropriated by state goes to school administration. There are only 3 studies on the effects of pre-k education. None of them find any significant difference in student performance within 2-3 months of kindergarten starting.

Comment: Kris- expressed that there is a lot of homeschooling which is excellent, private schools which are excellent. ASD test scores are bad. KCC was skill based when it was new. Kris's dad was the first principal. Recommends that ASD use CC as training for a job right out of school.

Comment: AI- highest score on proficiency tests in Alaska is Adak

Q: Mental health concerns – tremendous burden on mental health professionals in our area. Substance abuse issues. How are we going to implement more mental health awareness and education? How are policies being developed?

A: MAC- Give students avenues to express themselves, participate in activities. Noted

that staff satisfaction is also failing.

A: AH- one of the ways ASD addressed mental health was establishing middle schools in late 90s. Give students a chance to interact with each other in projects. SEL program has been in the district for years and is deliberately infused all through school. These programs get cut. It's not what it was 15-20 years ago. We have seen an uptick in aggression after Covid.

Comment: AH - Signing day happens every year at King Tech. Top kids sign employment agreement. Absolutely is part of our schools.

New Business:

None

AI moved to adjourn. Greg second. Approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 1:30pm.