

Mid-Town Community Council Open Meeting Minutes
Meeting located at 3000 C Street – Conference Room
Wednesday; March 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, Kirk Hastain, and Brian Swartzentruber

Sign in and Call to Order – Kris Stoechner President
Kris called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm

Approval of Minutes: 1 Min

Greg moved and Ric seconded that the minutes from February 8, 2023 be approved. The vote to approve was unanimous.

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

Balance in the account is \$345. Northrim Bank now charges a \$5/month maintenance fee. Kirk will have a proposal at April’s meeting about what to do about the fee.

Approval of Agenda: 1 Min

Ric moved and Greg seconded that the agenda be approved. Vote to approve was unanimous.

Committees:

Marijuana and Alcohol – Brian Swartzentruber & Rosemary Borchardt – **1 Minute**

Brian- MTCC board is neutral on the last two applications that have come before the MTCC. The board is discussing the possibility of requesting that license applicants attend a general MTCC meeting at least twice per year. Committee meeting with AMCO on March 14.

Kris- The MTCC has received another new application for a new marijuana store in what seems to be an already saturated market in MT.

Ric- Alaska State government is likely to add hemp as a regulated substance. Proposes changing the name of the committee to add hemp. Will discuss at the next MTCC board meeting and then brought to the general meeting.

Presenters:

Candidates running for Assembly; Seat G Midtown – **5 minutes each with questions after their presentations**

Travis Szanto- lots of concerns about the way the city is being handled, particularly the divisiveness. Small business owner and carpenter. His skills are in leadership, communication, and bringing people together. Would like to see city spending transparency, common sense solutions to homelessness, and increased dialogue to solve problems.

Felix Rivera- representing MT on the assembly since 2017. Feels he does a good job representing our district. MT district is one of his nine districts. He likes the MTCC because it can be relied on to push back and ask questions. Feels he comes away from each meeting having learned something new. Believes he has the trust of constituents.

Issues he has focused on:

1. Additional housing: brought on 300 units. We need 2400 units for low income and those experiencing homelessness. Worked with community partners to create emergency shelter plan.
2. Snow plowing- supported \$1.5 million increase for snow hauling and clearing sidewalks.

Running for 3rd and final term.

Questions – 10 minutes

Al Tamagni- FR has done an adequate job. Encourage transparency, particularly with public hearings.

FR- city has bolstered legislative branch and tried to increase transparency. The Assembly works to publicize public hearings well in advance.

TS- has been knocking on doors (over 1500 doors). Biggest complaint he hears is lack of transparency, limited right to speak.

Lindsey Hajduk- What are your housing policy solutions, especially in midtown?

TS- not sure policies we can actually get. Builders know it is extremely expensive to build, particularly with all the restrictions. Easier and cheaper to build in the Valley. Look at what they are doing out there and try to bring their strategy to Anchorage.

FR- Look at tax incentives, Reinvestment Focus Areas (RFAs). There is always a financial gap that prevents a builder from moving forward. Newly created Anchorage Affordable Housing and Land Trust could be a partial solution. Also continue looking at Title 21 and Title 23 reforms to lessen regulatory burden.

Ric Davidge- Project manager for many projects. National Association of Home Builders economist reported that “new homes in new subdivisions” are 45% more expensive than in any other state, and that this higher cost is directly related to regulations. Looking at those regulations should be one of the highest priorities. Other big problem is delays from permitting and inspections. Suggest reaching out to people in the construction industry to find solutions.

FR- absolutely important that the Assembly has good relationships with construction industry. Assembly has a strong relationship with AHBA. The housing plan the Assembly is currently working on is directly related to info from industry.

TS- MOA has a very high regulations for good reason because of earthquakes and poor soils, but it would behoove us as a city to look at those regulations and create efficiencies to make it easier for home builders.

Margo Bellamy– School Board President – 10 Minutes

The School Board will be restructured next month.

Meetings: The Board meets 1st and 3rd Tuesday. Welcome public comment, set aside 2 hours for public testimony. All meetings live-streamed. Also active on social media.

Budget: Last Friday meeting focused on budget. Board has submitted a balanced budget to the Assembly which will vote this month. Unfortunately, timing is such that the Board can't wait for Juneau to make its decision on funding before submitting the budget. Other notes on the budget:

- Started with \$68 million deficit, lowered to \$48 million.
- Closed Abbott Loop and Ursa Major on base (seismic damage)
- Increased PTR (pupil/teacher ratio) – increased class size and many schools will have decrease in staffing
- Reduced admin budget by \$5 million
- Applied a significant amount of one-time funding

6th Grade: Board approved the superintendent to bring a plan for moving 6th grade to middle school.

Boundaries: Will be changing. Lost 5000 students all around the district.

Election: Prop 1 – major maintenance, \$38 million for 30 schools

DOJ settlement: 2.5 year process. Sets into policy what the district is going to do to meet student needs and the terms of settlement.

Future: school start times, transitioning Abbott Loop families into two schools smoothly, discussion of school closures will come back. Need to keep advocating for increased Base Student Allotment, retirement benefits, mental health, bussing.

Question: Rosemary- concerned about parent not being allowed to finish testimony.
MB- we do not censor parents' comments

MB will send written report to Kris so that the MTCC will have all the current news from ASD.

Paint the Town- Lindsey Hajduk – 3 minutes

LH is the Director of community engagement at Neighborworks Alaska. For 40 years NA has worked to provide a pathway to home ownership.

Paint the Town seeking nominations of homeowners within MTCC that could use painting and minor repairs. Also looking for sponsorships. Event in June.

See flyer for details.

Boy Scouts of America – 10 Minutes

Kris Stoechner mentioned that she is on the board of the Great Alaska Council.

Sam- Scout Exec for GAC

Danielle-development director

Started in 1913 as an extension of Seattle council, became own council in 1930.

Serve ALL youth in Cubs, Scouts, Venturing, Exploring

Midtown- Anchorage Midtown Rotary sponsors one pack and three troops

Four "Camps" in Alaska:

1. Camp Gorsuch (Chugach)
2. Eagle River Camp (Juneau)
3. Denali Scout base (Denali)
4. Alaska High Adventure Base (all over)
5. Traveling day camps for rural communities

Eagle project contributions- over 5000 hours in Anchorage in 2022

Pinewood derby sponsorships available

New dining hall at Camp Gorsuch

Question: Kirk- organize spring clean up for MTCC?

Sam- Sharing spring clean-up message with all scouting units.

The BSA brought several pamphlets and free popcorn!

Assemblyman Felix Rivera - Mr. Rivera will provide a map showing all homeless shelters in the city of Anchorage - **10 Minutes**

Map hopefully completed for next month's meeting.

Ric has created a map showing crime in Midtown during January 2023

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

Meg Zaletel unable to attend.

Felix Rivera:

Facial Recognition Ordinance- working with Joey Sweet (who replaced Forrest Dunbar on the Assembly) on banning the use of facial recognition by public safety officials.

Parental Leave Benefit- MOA grant 4 weeks parental leave. Important to attract employees. 34% vacancy rate at health dept.

Homelessness- Administration has presented a plan for demobilization of emergency shelters. The plan includes continued use of Sullivan Arena and some parks as well as the old Alaska Native Charter School. Need to figure out next permanent steps. Need 200 permanent beds, 2400 units of affordable/low income housing.

Nathan Johnson – Providence Hospital Permanent Supportive Housing – 15 minutes

Providence Alaska House for elder supportive housing. Project had to be put on pause last year, but now breaking ground in April 2023. Hope to be up and running July 2024.

Units- 45 permanent, 6 units recuperative care.

Partner with Cook Inlet Housing.

Questions:

Kris- Neighborhood concerned about security- what are you doing?

NJ- Providence has a security team. Prov also owns St Elias across street and Alaska Cares. This project is aimed at elders with significant health issues. This will be a permanent home with leases where residents are held to terms of lease. Providence is not building and then walking away from this.

Rosemary- Will this be a dry facility?

NJ- In short, no. This is permanent housing, with the same rights any other resident would have in his/her own home. But residents will be held to their lease.

Rosemary- This is a follow up from your presentation last year?

NJ- Yes.

Ric- Happy to see and work with NJ

See handout for further information.

John Weddleton and Vic Molozzi– Anchorage Affordable Housing & Land Trust – 15 minutes

AAHLT is a non-profit with a volunteer board. Goal is to acquire and maintain housing for extremely low-income clients. Using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Cares Act funds. Essentially taking old hotels and turning them into apartments to rent cheaply. Guest House is 150 units. Lakeshore 40-45. Barratt is 85-95 units.

Expect tenants to have vouchers, social security, pension, or work. They will sign leases, must pay rent, and there will be standards that have to be adhered to. Whole group of organizations working together to provide services such as food, counseling, apprenticeships, etc. Facilities will look good, be good neighbors. There will be two people on staff 24/7 at each property.

Plan to remove half of the parking lot at Guest House to create outdoor gathering area.

Rents won't cover all the expenses. Will apply for grants to cover the rest.

Question: Rosemary- what is your management plan, security plan?

JW- just hired exec director, temporary director was Robin Ward. Will use contractors, possibly RuralCap, MASH- hope to keep staff lean. MASH= Mark Begich and Sheldon Fisher. Many people don't know the Aviator Hotel has been a low barrier shelter for 2 years because it's been run so well.

See handout for further information.

Fire Fighters- Station 4 at Tudor and MacInnes

Two bonds coming up next election. Benefits of bonds:

1. Two new replacements engines. We have an aging fleet. Facility improvements: garage doors, roof, kitchens
2. Transit bond- two new ambulances, upgrade radio networks (went down during earthquake)

Third bond for Chugach service area only- won't affect MidTown mil rate.

Friends of Midtown Park – Jim Renkert

Brought Shani Davis to Anchorage in February. Hugely successful.

Midtown park chalet- legislative grant request submitted. Part of the Parks and Recreation Bond in the upcoming election. Vote!

Jim brought a flyer about the Proposition A Parks and Rec Bond.

New Business: 7 Minutes

No new business.

Ric moved to adjourn. Kirk seconded. Meeting adjourned at 1:13 pm.