

**Eklutna Valley Community Council**  
**October 28 to November 9, 2022**  
**Meeting minutes**

This special meeting was chaired by council president Rick Sinnott and conducted by email. The meeting began on October 28 (at 2:01 pm). Thirty council members participated: Dan Thompson, Margan Grover, Buff and Deb Rix, Glen and Mary Keller, Erlinda Downing, Lisa and Rick Sinnott, Mike Wiedmer, Tom and Helen Bohn, Teal Heller, Russ Carpenter, Bob Reagan, Linda Hilton, Debbie and Steve Thon, Brian Slater, Skip and Tena Cheely, Leif Hovland, Randy Bangerter, Rod Rodriguez, Cindi and Bob McElroy, Steve Remme, Linda Clark, Kirk Alkire and Al Cousens.

A meeting agenda with only one item – the Chugiak-Eagle River cemetery issue – was approved unanimously. On October 31 Rick raised another issue that had just come up. Our representative's term on the Chugiak-Eagle River Advisory Board expired at the end of October. Rick asked for permission to add this issue to the agenda by universal consent. No objections were raised so the issue was added to the agenda.

Our bylaws allow a meeting by email only if the issue is not significant. We have determined in the past that appointment of our representative to an advisory board is not a significant issue that must be decided at an in-person meeting. All proposed cemetery sites were outside of our community council boundary and council officers decided that while the issue was important enough to warrant a meeting, it too was not significant enough in terms of our bylaws to mandate an in-person meeting. Thus, a meeting conducted by email was deemed appropriate. Relatively long periods were allotted informally for debate and voting.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Chugiak-Eagle River cemetery.** Anchorage's public and private cemeteries are running out of room. The Chugiak-Eagle River area, with approximately 35,000 residents, has no local public cemetery. In 2021, following a comprehensive planning effort ("Chugiak-Eagle River Cemetery: Preliminary Site Selection Study"), the best site for a local public cemetery was chosen. Site A-2 is off of Wolf Den Drive (formerly Yosemite Drive) between Eagle River High School and the Hilland Road Correctional Center. According to the design plan, the skiing, running and hiking trails being contemplated for the area could also be accommodated. The area would be developed in three phases, allowing plenty of room for full body burials and cremations for well over 100 years.

The cemetery selection process was conducted under a former mayor. With a new mayor and new municipal staff, the idea has languished. The municipality's Heritage Land Bank has given the muni notice that the land should be purchased soon or it will be sold to a developer. The muni has no funding or motivation to pursue this project at this time. Our Assembly members, Jamie Allard and Kevin Cross, are aware of the problem and seem interested in helping but the project needs a boost.

Girdwood also wants a cemetery and has asked Chugiak-Eagle River to support both cemeteries on a combined bond proposition. They would like to place a \$10 million cemetery bond on the April 2023 ballot, allocating \$3 million for the Chugiak-Eagle River cemetery, \$4 million for the Girdwood cemetery, and \$3 million for Anchorage Memorial Park renovations. Girdwood has asked the community councils in Chugiak and Eagle River for resolutions in November.

Somehow, through all the former site-selection effort, Eklutna Valley was never involved in the planning. The Chugiak-Eagle River Advisory Board voted to approve the cemetery in 2021 but it doesn't appear as though the Eklutna Valley Community Council was represented at that meeting. Now was our chance to weigh in.

Rick attached a copy of the cemetery selection plan and a map of the proposed design from the plan to the initial meeting email. He gave everyone several days to read and discuss the plan with family, friends and neighbors. Members with constructive comments or questions were instructed to use "reply all" to include the entire mailing list so everyone could see the comment.

Several members indicated a preference for Site A-2. Others debated the appropriateness of ski trails on the cemetery grounds and whether or not they should be built or maintained using the cemetery bond or any municipal taxes. After nearly five days of debate (11/2 at 11:18 am), Rick sent everyone a draft resolution for consideration. Lisa moved that the resolution be approved and Debbie Thon seconded it. The draft resolution included eight "whereases" and four provisions, including that the Eklutna Valley Community Council:

1. supports a public cemetery located at Site A-2; and
2. urges the Heritage Land Bank to work with the Mayor, the Assembly, Eagle River Parks and Recreation, and other municipal entities to place a bond proposition on the April 2023 municipal ballot that includes \$3 million for acquiring the land, designing and constructing the cemetery, and initial maintenance; and
3. acknowledges that the total bond package may include additional funding for a public cemetery in Girdwood and renovations to the Anchorage Memorial Cemetery; and
4. recommends that the municipal bond for the Chugiak-Eagle River cemetery not support the construction and maintenance of cross-country ski trails, and that the funding for any such trails come from private donations and volunteers.

Most comments expressed a preference for Site A-2 but several members thought another site would be more appropriate. Other than that the only item in the draft resolution that was discussed was the fourth provision of the "resolved" section (see above). Some members believed that it was appropriate to design and construct ski trails on the property using the cemetery bond and municipal taxes. Others did not. Everyone seemed to prefer that the trails be maintained by private funding and volunteers. Therefore, Bob Reagan proposed an amendment to the fourth provision and it was seconded by Tom Bohn. After several clarifications, all considered by Bob and Tom to be friendly amendments to the initial amendment, the following amendment was proposed:

4. recommends that no cemetery bond indebtedness, cemetery project fees, or municipal tax revenue be used to maintain cross-country ski trails constructed as part of the cemetery project, and that maintenance of any such trails come from private donations and volunteers.

Tom Bohn called the question (11/4 at 3:57 pm). Rick summarized the votes (12 for and 0 opposed, 11/5 at 3:34 pm). The amendment passed. Rick told members the deadline for proposing any other amendments to the resolution as amended would be midnight. No other issues had been raised thus far and none were anticipated.

The next day Rick asked for votes on the resolution as amended (11/6 at 9:11 am) and announced (11/7 at 1:53 pm) that the deadline for voting on the resolution as amended would

be 8 a.m. on November 9. The final tally (11/9 at 2:46 pm) was 15 votes for and 1 opposed. The resolution as amended passed.

Rick will send the adopted resolution to other involved community councils and elected officials in Anchorage.

**Chugiak-Eagle River Advisory Board representative.** The Chugiak-Eagle River Advisory Board is an umbrella organization that includes representatives from local community councils and makes recommendations to the municipality that involve community-wide issues.

Bob Reagan has been our representative on the advisory board, but his term ended on October 31. The term for the representative is supposed to last three years and we voted to appoint Bob to the advisory board in June 2021 but that term was an abbreviated one.

Bob indicated a willingness to serve another term. Lisa nominated Bob (10/31 at 2:40 pm) and Deb Rix seconded it. Other council members were encouraged to step up and Rick mentioned that we could also nominate and appoint an alternate representative. No other nominations were made.

Rick called the question (11/3 at 10:25 am) after allowing nearly three days for comments. At 10:53 a.m. on November 5 Rick set a deadline of 8 a.m. the following morning on votes for or against appointing Bob Reagan to the advisory board. The final tally was 25 for and 0 opposed.

Rick will write a letter to the municipality confirming that Bob Reagan has been appointed to another term.

A motion to adjourn the meeting (11/9 at 2:46 pm) was seconded and Rick asked for unanimous consent. Hearing no objections by midnight, the meeting was adjourned at that time.