

Eklutna Valley Community Council
April 13, 2023
Meeting minutes

The meeting was chaired by council president Rick Sinnott and began at 6:33 p.m. We met at the Chugach State Park ranger station. Eighteen council members were present: Margan Grover, Dan Thompson, Bob Reagan, Russ Carpenter, Teal Heller, Lisa and Rick Sinnott, Mike Wiedmer, Tom Bohn, Barry Rogers, Linda Hilton, Patrick Burns, Kirk Alkire, Kevin Menkens, Buff Rix, Debbie Slater, Jason Browning, and Dave Briseno. Jonathan and Jamie Lang, with Lang Associates, and Robin Dern, our Anchorage assemblyperson, also attended the meeting. Representative Dan Saddler attended a portion of the meeting from Juneau by FaceTime.

Allowing time for brief presentations by our attending municipal and state representatives, the meeting agenda was approved unanimously. The minutes of the February 8, 2023, council meeting were approved unanimously with no changes.

Dan Thompson reported that the council still has \$578.38 in its account.

OLD BUSINESS

Local crime report. No new suspicious activity was reported.

Wildfire planning and mapping. Jen Schmidt, the UAA researcher, has drafted a report on wildfire safety and evacuation plans for the municipality. Rick and Margan have a copy and will review it. The final report is expected in a month or two, and Rick will email the report to Eklutna Valley residents. Once the final report is completed, Rick plans to contact the Anchorage Office of Emergency Management to explore funding opportunities for a cell tower in the valley for residents and park visitors because it has obvious public safety ramifications.

Jen is also pursuing a cell tower for Eklutna Valley. She recently met with a fellow named Skip (not our Skip) with Vertical Bridge, a company that builds cell towers and then leases them to a carrier like GCI or AT&T. Skip was surprised that there were no towers in Eklutna Valley. The normal process is that a landowner will contact Vertical Bridge and express interest in a cell tower on their property. If Vertical Bridge believes a tower is feasible and needed, it would pay a monthly lease for using the property, build the tower, and then lease the tower to the carrier. Any site selected would probably need to be high on a slope, so Rick has asked if Vertical Bridge can give us an idea where the good locations are first.

Community council boundary. Every 10 years the municipality is required to contact community councils and determine if any boundary changes are needed. Based on our input the muni does not plan to make any changes to our council boundary.

Funding request for repairing the Eklutna Lakeside Trail. After our last meeting, Rick sent a letter expressing our support for state funding to repair, and reroute in some places, the Eklutna Lakeside Trail. Rep. Saddler told us the proposal is still alive and, because he is familiar with the trail and its maintenance needs, he intends to support it in the final budget package.

NEW BUSINESS

Cheely's new subdivision. Jonathan Lang, the Cheely's surveyor and subdivision planner, shared a map showing the seven lots and one tract on the 30.5-acre parcel (see attached map).

Ryan Cheely owns Lot 1. The other six lots would each be two acres or a little larger. Access to the lots will be from Tena Street and Raymond Avenue. Tract A is about 12 acres. There is no plan to sell Tract A at this time; however, in the future it could be subdivided into up to four additional lots. Jonathan said that the muni wanted any existing cabins on Lots 2-7 removed.

Jonathan told us that his pre-application meeting with the planning division and our community council meeting were steps 1 and 2 of the subdivision process. The next step will be his submission of the final subdivision plan to the Anchorage Platting Board. That will start a 45-day comment period. At the end of the period, the final step will be for the platting board to hold a public meeting to consider approving the subdivision. Jonathan said it would be at least a week before he submitted the final plan and started the clock. He asked our community council to support the proposed subdivision, mentioned that any concerns we had as an advisory body should be shared with the platting board, and assured us that individuals were also encouraged to submit comments to the platting board.

Jonathan also answered questions about access to the lots, the difference between easements versus rights-of-way and lots versus tracts, the definition of aliquot part, and the alignments of Rosehip Ridge Road and the northern, unimproved extension of Tena Street. He acknowledged that the unimproved extension of Tena Street is not centered on the property line; it is largely or completely off of Tract A. Rosehip Ridge Road is also largely not on Tract A.

A general concern was raised about the number of subdivisions and other developments that have been proposed in Eklutna Valley in recent years. Eklutna Lake Road is marginally adequate (some might say inadequate) for the existing traffic, and more residents and park visitors will make the road less safe and sustainable.

Council members discussed the subdivision proposal. After a straw poll where two-thirds of those present indicated a willingness to support the subdivision with reservations, a motion to support the subdivision with reservations was made and seconded. There was not enough time remaining in the meeting to draft a letter of support much less compile and agree on the community's concerns, so Rick told members he would give council members about a week to send him any concerns. He said he would send out an email asking for input from all members, then draft the letter and present it for council approval either at a future meeting or for a vote by email. With those assurances, members voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Updating the Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan. Birchwood Community Council passed a resolution last month asking the Anchorage Assembly or the muni's planning director to review and, if necessary, update the Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan. BCC asked other community councils for their support.

The Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan was adopted because Chugiak, Eagle River, Birchwood and Eklutna Valley believe that our community is different from Anchorage and requires different land use ordinances. According to municipal code the plan should be reviewed at least once every 10 years to ensure it is consistent with economic and demographic trends, recent and proposed land use decisions, and adopted studies and plans. It has been 16 years since the plan was last updated.

Members agreed that the comprehensive plan is a "living document" and it was time to review and, if necessary, update it. A motion was made and seconded to send a resolution similar to that written by BCC. Rick passed out a copy of the BCC resolution with changes and read the

revised resolution out loud. Bob Reagan proposed a friendly amendment to combine BCC's last two "whereas" statements. The motion to send the resolution as revised passed unanimously.

Assemblyperson Robin Dern's comments. Robin was temporarily appointed to the Anchorage Assembly to fill Jamie Allard's seat when she was elected to be our state representative in Juneau. Robin's term expires in a couple of weeks. For being on the Assembly only a short time, she appears to have her hands full. She mentioned so many issues and challenges that Rick was only able to write down the ones that seemed to affect Eklutna Valley most directly. The Assembly is trying to find a long-lasting solution to the muni's homeless issue. She mentioned her support for the proposed Eagle River cemetery that we resolved to support late last year and the restoration of the Eklutna River, which we have also supported by resolution. She is working on a plan to get holiday bus service restored to Eagle River. She's also working on a solution to facilitate new owners' use of formerly vacant and abandoned properties. Finally, she mentioned cleaning up the muni's ordinances.

Robin said anyone interested in riding along with an Anchorage police officer, especially in and around Eklutna Valley, should apply to the APD. Here's a link:
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f80ce8c1783002d6e280cdb/t/61f98811d6cea41b7c6f5dfa/1643743249641/Ride+Along+Application+Feb+2022.pdf>

She also mentioned PulsePoint, which is a 911-connected mobile app that alerts willing citizens to someone nearby having a sudden cardiac arrest, as well as the location of nearby automated external defibrillators. Willing and trained responders can help bridge the gap between an emergency event and Chugiak Volunteer Fire Department units arriving on scene. Subscribers to the app can select to receive specific notifications for other emergencies such as wildfires, structure fires or motor vehicle accidents. This seems like a good program for Eklutna Valley residents because we live a long way from paramedic and fire services. More information:
<https://www.muni.org/Departments/Fire/Pages/PulsePoint.aspx>

Representative Dan Saddler's comments. In addition to supporting funding for maintaining the Eklutna Lakeside Trail, Dan mentioned many other irons in the fire. He is hoping to secure funding for a 20-room addition to Chugiak Senior Center. If you'd like to find out what other legislation Dan is involved with he will send you a free newsletter. Call 907-465-3783 to subscribe.

Eklutna Lake Road cleanup. The road cleanup period was extended to early June this year because we don't know if the snow will melt by early May. We will tentatively plan to meet for the annual road cleanup in mid-May, depending on what the snow does. Rick will send a notice via email and the community Facebook page.

Bluewater Basecamp update. Bluewater Basecamp has all of its permits. Russ plans on beginning cabin construction this spring and hopes to finish this year. Their well is 140 feet deep and produces 12-14 gallons/minute.

The meeting adjourned at about 8:25 p.m.

