

**Mid-Town Community Council (MTCC) Emergency Town Hall Minutes**  
**3000 C Street –First Floor Conference Room**  
**Thursday July 27, 2023**  
**1:30 to 3:30 PM**

**Sign in and Call to Order** – Kris Stoechner President – All MTCC businesses, residents, land owners and guests are welcome to participate and bring ideas forward to this meeting. We welcome all other guests.

Kris Stoechner called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm and introduced the speakers and the goals of the meeting.

Goals of this meeting:

- To bring visibility to the issue of lawlessness in the Anchorage Midtown area.
- To bring Midtown businesses together so they become a meaningful force that will advocate on this issue.
- To urge the Muni to take a meaningful and effective action to address its homelessness and housing crisis, which will result in safer, cleaner streets for midtown.
- To explore, research, and work with stakeholders to assist the Muni in determining what action would be appropriate.

Officers and Members of the Board present:

Kris Stoechner, president  
Megan Debenham, secretary  
Greg McDonald, board member  
Al Tamagni, board member  
Bill Borchardt, board member  
Brian Swartzentruber, board member  
Rosemary Borchardt, board member

Approximately 40-50 people attended in-person (30 signed in). 11 people attended on Zoom.

**Speakers**

Ben Farkash, Attorney at Ashburn & Mason, P.C. – Representing a midtown business  
Emergency meeting because this is an emergency, meaningful action is needed, requires collaboration.

Lieutenant Luis Soto, Anchorage Police Department, Community Action Policing Team, Intelligence Unit, and Mobile Intervention Team

If you see an active crime, call 911. Call 311 for a non-active crime. There is a priority of calls. APD is just one component of addressing issues surrounding homelessness. Has obtained approval to research a real-time crime center with video surveillance using businesses' cameras.

Mario Bird, Mayor's Chief of Staff

National archive site won't be the place for the allowed camp pilot project. If you see a crime, call 911. The mayor supports APD in every way.

Felix Rivera, Assembly Member and Chair of the Housing/Homelessness Committee

Number one concern is providing emergency cold weather shelter for approximately 450 individuals this winter. Focusing on non-congregate shelters such as the Aviator Hotel as well as expanding capacity in existing shelters.

### **Questions/Statements from the floor**

Matt Tomter, Matanuska Brewing Company

Operates locations in MT, Eagle River and Palmer. Midtown location is the only one with criminal activity. \$11,000 of heaters stolen and self-recovered. Public sex, drinking on the corner have to be treated as crimes. Urges the MTCC to push the government to make these crimes prosecutable. MBC pays \$75,000 in alcohol taxes which isn't being used effectively.

Allen Jackson, First National Bank

Calls on MOA to immediately provide housing to mitigate crime. FNB has experienced vandalism of ATMs, broken windows, trash, and even physical assault of a security guard. Concerned for personal safety.

Bill Koltschnee, First National Bank

Responsible for three branches in MT. Has had to hire additional security, close ATMs, remove trash cans. Personally knows of 5 business that were broken into, vehicle windows broken, and even people sleeping cars. Status quo is not working. Things that have worked in the past: reporting crimes, removing camps, and communicating with nearby business owners to support each other.

Kenny Petersen, Resident and Owner of Allen and Petersen

Suggests engaging with homeless people and establishing common values of professionalism, safety, etc. Outlined several things that don't work:

1. Arresting- expensive and doesn't solve long-term problems
2. Psych Wards – violates human rights
3. Move them out – there is nothing in other locations for them

Had success in the past with a talking group comprised of ACEH and homeless individuals.

Joe Fang, Owner of several building in MT

Anchorage's homelessness problem is miniscule compared to San Francisco, but if left unchecked it will grow. Has tenants that want to move out because clients won't come to their business. Suggests sending homeless individuals somewhere else.

Ron Alleva, Owner of Grubstake Auction

Has experienced the worst of criminal activity at his property on 3<sup>rd</sup> and Ingra. Can no longer operate his business. Solution is for the city to buy his property and build a shelter or establish an allowed camp there. Also suggests looking at the Chugach Electric north campus which is for sale.

Rick and Vicki Solberg, Natural Pantry

Lost \$100,000s through shoplifting. Most important thing is to treat people as human beings. Some people are standing in the way of what the homeless population needs.

Chris George, Lowes

His job is to keep employees safe, from 4:00 am to 11:00 pm. Escorts are needed for employees to enter and leave work. Constant clean up, stolen electricity. The city cleaned up the area for the music festival, but doesn't seem to care the rest of the time.

Ethan Tyler, CIRI

Has seen significant increase in illegal activity at CIRI properties. Calls on the MOA to take meaningful action.

Rosemary Borchardt, MTCC Board member and business owner

Question: What is the feasibility of police substations at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Ingra and by the library?

Lt. Soto- used to have substations, but leases were lost, lack of staffing and money

Rosemary- could APD park at Cuddy while doing end of shift paperwork? Just the presence of APD could make a big difference.

Lt. Soto- APD sometimes need isolated, quiet place to complete paperwork

Felix Rivera- APD can come up with a plan and the costs of establishing substations

Misconception about APD staffing- MOA has provided funding, but there is a lack of interest in joining APD.

Kris Stoechner, MTCC President and business owner

Enlightened yesterday when she found many squares of tin foil at Cuddy Park, used for heroin. She has seen drug deals going down. Police presence at the park would make a difference.

#### **Resolution: MTCC 2023-04**

Kenny Petersen

Has worked to pass resolutions in the past, and they've gone nowhere. Need to consider who is receiving this resolution and how the MTCC can help fulfill it.

Motion: Rosemary Borchardt moves and Brian Swartzentruber seconds that MTCC Resolution 2023-04 be passed.

#### **Discussion**

Kenny Petersen

How will the six "now therefore" statements be measured? How can the MTCC help make these things happen? Suggests establishing a private fund for bullet points three and four:

- to increase law enforcement or other patrols in midtown
- Municipality-provided cleaning of fouled sidewalks, doorways, and other spaces

Commits \$10,000 for such a fund.

Mike Mason, FNB

This isn't just an Anchorage problem, this is a state of Alaska problem. The state never established the drug treatment program that was supposed to go along with reduced prison

sentences. There is no space in treatment centers, and mental health/drug treatment is where real difference will be made.

Motion: Rosemary Borchardt moves and Brian Swartzentruber seconds that MTCC Resolution 2023-04 be voted upon as is currently reads.

Vote in favor: 17 Opposed: 1 Abstained: 0

Greg McDonald moves to adjourn. Rosemary Borchardt seconds. Meeting adjourned at 2:50 pm.