

Mid-Town Community Council (MTCC) General Meeting Minutes
Meeting located at 3000 C Street –First Floor Conference Room
Wednesday, December 13, 2023
12:00 Noon to 1:30 PM

Sign in and Call to Order – Kris Stoechner President – All MTCC businesses, residents, landowners and guests are welcome to participate and bring ideas forward to this meeting.

Kris Stoechner called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm.

MTCC Officers and Board Members in Attendance:

Kris Stoechner, President
Ric Davidge, Vice President
Megan Debenham, Secretary
Mike Mason, Board Member
Greg McDonald, Board Member
Bill Borchardt, Board Member
Brian Swartzentruber, Board Member
Rosemary Borchardt, Board Member

Approval of Minutes: 1 Minute

Ric moved and Greg seconded that the minutes from the November 8, 2023, general meeting be approved. Minutes were approved unanimously.

Treasurer’s Report – Jason Bergerson - Treasurer – 1 Minute

Jason was not present.

Approval of Agenda: 1 Minute

Agenda was modified to have the state district attorney speak first. Ric moved and Greg seconded that the agenda as modified be approved. Agenda was approved unanimously.

- State DA – Heather Nobrega – 15 minutes

Kris- part of the MTCC strategic plan to make MT safe is working with District Attorneys.

Heather Nobrega is a Deputy DA in the Anchorage office.

What happens to people who are arrested?- Either referred to DA or municipal attorneys.

Misdemeanors mostly go to MOA. For a felony, the DA screens cases beyond a reasonable doubt. If they can’t prove the crime they decline to process the case. Court system website has details about how bail works. Majority of people arrested don’t remain in custody. There are “frequent flyers” who are arrested multiple times. DAs can only make recommendations, don’t determine who stays in custody. Also have limited resources (attorneys) for prosecution.

Rosemary- Anchorage not doing well crime-wise. What would improve the situation?

HN- citizens can have more cameras, security. APD is understaffed. Theft offenses are lower priority than violent crimes. Homelessness has increased. Finding affordable housing and addressing mental health issues. Huge majority of offenses have substance abuse problems. Federal Drug and alcohol court tries to address these things (60 people cap).

Mike- APD used to have a gang unit. What is SOA doing to solve this problem?
HN- Federal funds are used to go after “bigger fish.” Can’t speak to APDs structure.

Kevin Hennigan- Does DA track % of cases that APD brings that aren’t prosecuted?
HN- system can run the numbers, but she doesn’t know the %.

KH- There are frequent flyers. How can that loophole be closed?

HN- requires some state legislative changes to bail statutes. AK constitution gives everyone a right to bail. Other ways that other states do it.

David Morgan- Rogers Park has formed a community watch. 21 residents active over six months.
Residences with cameras and have foiled 5 crimes.

Ric- number of cities are now filing lawsuits against city government for failure to provide services for which they are taxed. Human trafficking is also a major issue.

HN- recommends also talking to city prosecutors. Urging the state to change bail statute is another good place to start.

Assembly – Felix Rivera, Meg Zaletel, Chris Constant, Daniel Volland – Update on relevant subjects – 5 Minutes Total

No Assembly members were present in the meeting.

Committees:

AMATS -Meg Zaletel and Jason Bergerson – 2 Minutes
Meg and Jason were not present.

Marijuana and Alcohol – Aqua Vitae - Brian Swartzentruber & Rosemary Borchardt – 2 minutes
Rosemary- AV is a package store liquor license being transferred. Strip mall on Benson.
Application almost deemed complete. Haven’t spoken to new owner, Gallo. When application deemed complete will invite Gallo to general meeting.

Transit Center Study Update – Jason Bergerson – 2 minutes
Jason was not present.

Presenters:

Mayor’s Office – Trista Espe or Michelle Hodel - 4 Minutes
Michelle Hodel read the mission statement of the Southcentral Mayors Energy Coalition, formed yesterday. Mayors of Anchorage, Kenai, Mat-Su Borough, Kenai Borough, Wasilla, Palmer, Soldotna, Seward, Houston, Homer, and Whittier are joining to find solutions to meet the energy needs of Southcentral which is facing a looming energy shortage. State task force on energy released findings on December 1, 2023.

Kris asked if the mayor could change the day of the monthly downtown business owners meeting. MH suggested that the mayor would be happy to have a monthly meeting for Midtown business owners.

School Board – Kelly Lessens – 3 Minutes

Students who live in Dimond Estates will be enrolling at Dimond and Mears rather than South and Golden View. Will decrease travel time for those students.

Board met with partner organizations to discuss academies of Anchorage- career pathway options in 2025.

AEA agreement

Budget- Assembly has to approve a balanced budget early March. Board is approving a pro forma budget with a \$98 million shortfall for the 2024-25 school year. Can spend down the fund balance up to \$71 million. The fund has a balance because of historic levels of vacancies and attrition. Still would leave a \$27-45 million hole, which will require a combination of increased pupil to teacher ratio, cutting sports, activities, programs, ignite, etc. Go to Asdk12.org/fy25 for everything budget. Community survey open until December 15: asdk12.org/fy25survey

Legislators – Chuck Kopp – SB88 – 8 Minutes Senator Gray-Jackson, House Representative Alyse Galvin & Andy Josephson – 4 Minutes Each - Comment on SB88

Chuck Kopp- Retired police officer, speaking for Cathy Giessel about SB88, a defined benefit pension bill. In 2006 the State closed defined benefit system, moved to 401k. Went from a state that was an attractive employer to having a hard time retaining employees. Current vacancy is over 20 percent. 50 positions understaffed at Anchorage fire department. APD down 76 positions, with all officers working mandatory overtime. Troopers down over 70. A top reason is no secure retirement. The SB88 pension plan is a bare bones plan. No healthcare included. Risk is shared by employees. Standard is set at 90%. Fairbanks is offering \$60,000 bonus to police officers. \$5000 referral incentive.

Andy Josephson- Senate is inclined to pass the bill pretty handily. House is more reluctant. This bill won't result in new unfunded liabilities. Not a gold-plated program.

Besse Odom- Chief of Staff Senator EGJ – Senator on board with SB88

Ric- Can AJ send a list of those that are yes and those that are no?

Rosemary- what does AJ think about changing the bail statute?

AJ- SB91 was repealed by HB49 in 2019. Bail was set by the computer. Judges now have discretion restored to them. Be aware that the ACLU has taken up the cause of those that are pretrial.

Mike- context is the frequent flyer criminal. Bail seems to be set for each offense in isolation.

AJ- in his experience, judges have increased bail for repeat offenders

CK- there is enough discretion for the judge to determine no right to bail

- **Other:**
- **Vote on Resolution MTCC 2023-06 Resolution to support police wage increase – 5 Minutes**

Assembly voting on Tuesday on the police wage increase. This has been negotiated with the mayor.

Kris will send our resolution to the Assembly tomorrow.

Resolution 2023-06 passed unanimously.

- **VOTE on Resolution MTCC 2023-07 Resolution in opposition to MTCC BID – Greg McDonald - 10 Minutes**

Greg- There was a grant administered through the ACDA to do a study about whether a BID should be formed. Preliminary survey results show community property owners 66% against BID.

Ric- how does a BID work?

Greg- special assessment (additional property tax) on property owned in MT.

Kerry Lynch- is it premature to vote now since we don't have final results of the survey?

Greg- this is our monthly meeting and the survey only has two more days

Mike- vast majority of business owners don't feel they are getting the services from the city- Assembly needs to look at that.

Ric moved and Mike seconded that the MTCC approve Resolution 2023-07. Voting was 10 in favor, one opposed. Motion passes.

- **District 1 Call to Action – Kris –1 minute**

District 1 CC presidents were concerned that **850** people will be back on the streets end of April, so they wrote the Call to Action. This is the first time anything like this has been done in Anchorage.

Ric- Many cities have solved this problem. Perhaps Anchorage could look outside.

Presenters

- **Mayoral Candidate – Chris Tuck – 8 Minutes**

Not running for personal ambition, but because he was asked. Need economic development. Bridge crane needed at the port. Need our own manufacturing base. Need vibrant university system. Has served on ASD Board and got King Career Center open for summer school. Public safety, introduced defined benefit program as legislator. Taft-Hartley plan is most bang for buck. What was announced today is a hybrid of TH and state plan. MOA needs its own retirement plan. Wants to work together.

Ric- knows Chris well and has worked with him despite political differences

- **Enlightened Extracts – Transfer of Marijuana License and Vote on MOU – Representative from Enlightened Extracts - 5 Minutes**

Jane Stinson 50% owner, two adult children as owners. In cannabis since 2017 in Spenard. Opened 524 East 48th Ave. in 2020. Have three licenses. Working on 4th license.

Evan Levinton – 15000 ft warehouse. All closed rooms. Don't exhaust out. Carbon filters in place. No smell complaints.

Kris- Employees driving wrong side of street, parking wrong direction. Have been some verbal complaints about smell. Have knocked on the door, but no one answered.

Jane- Doorbell now. Can also call.

Motion in favor of adopting the MOU between the MTCC and Enlighthened Extracts passed unanimously.

New Business

Kris - Please pay attention to what Assembly is doing about the homelessness. 150 people housed at cost of \$31000 per person/year. Not sure where the 150 people will be living. Kenny Petersen is her contact. The city's goal is housing when it should be self-reliance. Assembly has a two-hour work session on Friday.

Mike – as part of the strategic plan, Mike is working with Brian McCutcheon to collect information about all of the organizations working on homelessness. Lot of stakeholders working in isolation. Trying to inventory different actors and make operation more efficient.

Ric moved and Greg seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 1:22 pm.