

Old Seward/Oceanview Community Council

MINUTES: Friday, March 8, 2024, 6:30–8:30 pm

Location: 12100 Old Seward Hwy, Rabbit Creek Church Huffman Campus

Zoom.com Meeting ID: 844 5795 0064 - Audio and Video Recorded

2024 Winter/Spring Schedule: Jan 12, Mar 8, May 10, July 12, Sept 13, Nov 8 (elections)

Website: <http://communitycouncils.org/osovcc>

To open links in the minutes select: **Ctrl +** then right click with your mouse

Board members present: Joan Henry (President), Kevin Skiba (Vice President), John Henry (Treasurer), Peggy Kircher (Acting Secretary Absent), Gary Meader (FCC Delegate) Gloria Lyons (FCC Alternate)

Establish Quorum / Call to Order – A quorum was established. There were fourteen members present, and five guests. Vice President Kevin called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm, explained the meeting protocol, and defined voting members versus non-voting guests.

Zoom Protocol Review – Treasurer John Henry read the Zoom protocol and advised that the meeting is recorded.

Approval of Agenda and Minutes – Joan outlined the agenda and Kevin read the minutes of the January 12, 2024, meeting which were posted online. Doug S. moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Robert R.

Officer Reports – The Treasurer reported that our account balance as of February 29, 2024, was \$1,540.75, which includes \$0.13 in interest.

FCC Report -- Gary reported that the January 2024 FCC meeting did not have a quorum, so it was informational only. Mayor Bronson reported that green cards were sent out at 99.1% of real estate values.

At the February 21, 2024, meeting it was reported that the Anchorage School District is \$98 million in the red due to young professionals leaving Anchorage at a rate of 77%, childcare is 15% of income for families, and single moms spend 35% of their income for childcare. The housing coalition wants to house 150 pp/day at a cost of \$15,000/day and have a \$4.6 million budget. Assemblyman Kevin Cross has vacated his position. There are 52 Municipality of Anchorage boards with vacancies. The next FCC meeting is on March 20, and April 17, 2024, or the third Wednesday of each month. Alternate FCC Delegate Gloria was available via Zoom.

Representatives/Community Reports

Alaska State Senator Cathy Giessel

Cathy stated that she was on the Budget committee for the Alaska Railroad hearing.

She brought forward the Natural Gas supply issue and how there is no gas out there available for development in the next few years. A company named Furie Operating of Alaska, LLC has a lease called Kitchen Lights that has 300 BCF of gas in the inlet right now and is building a platform, so permitting will take at least 10 years. We use about 70 BCF/year. A company called Amaroq Resources, AIX Energy, and Cook Inlet Energy have small amounts of gas. Hilcorp is not drilling. Last summer they drilled nine wells but found no gas.

The Senate reviewed twelve of the Governor's Executive Orders (EO) – eliminating boards, Budget & PFD

Doug S. – We all need natural gas; electrical generation runs off natural gas too. Prioritize South Central, restart the AGRA plant, and not sell Natural Gas to China, etc. SOA cannot sit around and not do anything.

Cathy G. – A bullet line from the North Slope to South Central would cost \$10 Billion, maybe the State can subsidize it, but at minimum it is a 10 yr. project, while utilities are facing a 3-year shortage in the short term. Furie has a lease on Kitchen Lights, 300 BCF in inlet, under their platform, we use 70 BCF/yr. Furie's issue: purchased in Bankruptcy and owe 12.5% royalty to SOA, plus a carryover from bankruptcy to investors. The Governor offered to lower the SOA total to less than 20%, not 25% total. Amaroq Resources, AIX, and Cook Inlet Energy can also benefit from the lower royalty. Cathy is proposing an amendment of 5% for small companies. Hilcorp has 80-90% of the leases in the inlet but they are not drilling. They drilled 12 wells last summer and no gas was found. In Alaska, 75% of the population lives off the Railbelt and off the electric grid.

Cathy G. – Has a bill in the Senate for Gas Storage and Furie needs a place to store gas. Enstar's CINGSA is across the inlet. Enstar operates it to provide heat during the winter. The Regulatory Commission of Alaska regulates the rates that can be charged for that gas. Hilcorp can charge whatever they want because they are not under the RCA.

The Transmission Grid runs from Bradley Lake to Fairbanks, but there are no electric redundancies. The Alaska Energy Authority received a \$206.5 million grant from the Federal government to put a Direct Current line under Cook Inlet. The State needs to match that \$206.5 million. But Alaska does not have the money.

Doug S. – What about Royalty funds in the General Fund? Can these funds go to this problem?

Cathy G. – The State cannot designate funds, so it is a problem. As Willow and Pikka come online on the North Slope. We will get more money, but it will not be in time. Mead Treadwell and his investors are investing in ice breaking vessels to bring LNG to South Central, but there are a lot of offshore issues: shallow waters, draft of the vessels, pipeline to get the LNG to the vessels. Use of the Ice Breaking vessels and infrastructure may be 10 years out too.

Cathy G. --The Blue Crest gas deposit has more LNG than Furie, but it is offshore. They are producing oil laterally, but it will not work for LNG. Blue Crest needs \$150 million and cannot find investors. The owner needs a platform which requires Federal permitting which puts the project out 10 years.

Kevin S. – Blue Crest has larger reservoirs of LNG and may have 5 years of product. Can you move platforms already in the inlet? How's about the Susitna Watana Dam, it is nonpolluting and a renewable energy source?

Cathy G. – There are permitting issues and Talkeetna does not want it.

Doug S.-- All military bases run off Natural Gas. The Federal Government needs to recognize that Russia is an issue and the U.S. security that's provided by our military.

Cathy G. – Eielson is testing a small nuclear Reactor, which could be used in small communities.

Cathy G. – The PFD is in the Senate finance committee. Revenue is down and it depends on the oil price. If a 25% dividend is expected, then we will receive \$1,300/per eligible person. If a 20% PFD, then \$1,100 or \$1,000.

Cathy G. – The Governor’s Executive Orders & Boards being eliminated include the Midwives Board, Barbers and Hairdressers Board, Massage Board, The Wood Tikchik State Park Citizens Advisory Committee, Chilkat Bald Eagle Reserve, Recreational Rivers Committee, Reconstitute the Alaska Energy Authority Board of Directors, the Alaska Marine Highway Operations Board, Criminal Justice Information Advisory Board, and the Alaska Safety Advisory Board. All of which include citizen involvement in the process, so we have a voice. We need 40 votes, meaning the House needs to agree.

Senator Giessel publishes a weekly [newsletter](#) every Thursday morning. Subscribe if interested. Contact: sen.cathy.giessel@akleg.gov.

Representative Craig Johnson - Not present; no report provided.

Anchorage Fire Department. Not present; no report provided.

Anchorage Police Department. Sgt. Schafer, not present; no report provided.

Assembly member Zac Johnson: Present at the meeting via Zoom.

Zac reported that four assembly members went to Juneau to meet 20 legislators to get support for the Port of Alaska Modernization project, funding the cold weather shelters through summer, and asking the State of Alaska to invest in the Alaska Housing Trust – Housing Alaska Public/Private partnership (with Weidner Apartment Homes).

On the ballot for the Municipal election are a \$5 million dollar Toilet Bond, Chugach access service area bond, upgrades to Canyon Road bond, Cemetery bond for Girdwood, Eagle River, and for upgrades to the Anchorage Cemetery; a \$62 million school bond with money for Inlet School rebuild and security & fire upgrades for Klatt school, a revenue bond for Terminal 2 at the Port.

Short Term Rentals like Airbnb and VRBO may be required to register with the city and pay a \$400 fee along with new operating rules so that the MOA can gather data and build controls for operators that have problem rentals.

Zac is cosponsor of an Ordinance to provide protection for bus drivers, like a first responder, e.g., an assault charged person could face prosecution or a ride ban for a certain amount of time.

The Assembly passed HB89 related to childcare and who can receive subsidies.

Robert R.—Asked if the city was working on the PERS and Defined Benefits package. Zac said the MOA is supporting the State of Alaska’s Defined Benefit plan and is not pursuing a separate agreement. There is a possible 20% wage increase over the next 4-5 yrs. And includes snowplow operators. Contact Zac if you would like to grab a cup of coffee and discuss Assembly issues.

Assembly member Randy Sulte. No presence or report provided. Randy Sulte is available to the public every Saturday 8-10am at Kaladi Brothers off Huffman Road. The Anchorage Assembly publishes a monthly Newsletter you can [sign-up for at this link](#).

Anchorage School Board – Pat Higgins: No presence or report provided.

Committee Reports

Community Patrol Report - Jeff Childs, the OSOV Community Patrol officer, was not able to attend this meeting, so John Henry reported for Jeff. Jeff and others provided over 498-man hours of patrol duty in 2023. The old RV, previously discussed in meetings that parked near Lowe's caught on fire. Be vigilant and report any illegal activity to the Anchorage Police Department via 911 for emergencies and 311 for non-emergencies. If you have other concerns or are available to help, contact OSOVCC Community Patrol: 907-240-7880 or 907-250-5379.

Eldon Subdivision WDID and LID

Joe Alston reported that with Senator Gissel's help and guidance, he resubmitted the "Request for Funding" with an understanding the State does not have the money. He changed 2 dates and resubmitted the Request for Funding. Senator Murkowski also worked with AWWU to get \$2.7 million in funding for the utilities. Eldon Subdivision has no public water or fire protection, and the pressure may not be adequate. The current lines are not guaranteed by AWWU to be adequate. If funding goes through, the subdivision could get a 12" line with funding for fire hydrants, water, and sewer lines in the area.

120th Upgrade - Jan 29, 2024, channelization from Johns Road to Old Seward Hwy. Funding for 2025? Zac Johnson will investigate the funding.

Johns Road Alleyway – People are racing up and down the alleyway between John's Road and Division St. It is like a drag strip.

Joan talked to Zac Hartman, Traffic Control Engineer for the MOA, who said they will be in the area to look at what they can do with signage or speed bumps.

Joe Alston reported that where you live is your responsibility as it is going to take a team effort, which includes you. Many children play in the area, ride their bikes, and parents walk with baby carriages. There are few signs or traffic calming devices (speed bumps) in the area. Get feedback from your neighbors. A member mentioned that people are using it as a main through-fare, going each way and that directional signs and posted speed limits would help too.

A couple of members requested that the Board reach out to MOA street maintenance regarding some dangerous snow piles that are blocking views of children on Klatt Road, Brandon and Old Seward. They had already called themselves but had not received attention.

Old Business

Alaska Railroad Trail on the Easement

John Pletcher, a member of the OSOVCC, and Chuck Kopp, our previous Representative, reported on House Bill 332, which is in the legislature right now, to sell the Alaska Railroad.

Chuck K.—The problem with the sale of the Alaska Railroad has to do with property that the ARR has managed to wrestle away from private landowners over the last several years. The Old Seward/Oceanview Community Council includes the Flying Crown Homeowners Association, which the Alaska Railroad sued for Quiet Title, to take landowners 1950 patented land stating they have Exclusive Use, meaning they own the land in the Right-of-Way (ROW).

When the land was originally sectioned the ARR had a right of way OVER the land for a Railroad and Telegraph easement. The Department of the Interior gave patents to the ARR around 2007 for that right-of-way, which then overlaid the previously patented land, even though it was only supposed to be a right-of-way over the landowner's patented land.

Landowners from Seward to Fairbanks were not notified of any of this change to their patented land. That is wrong and needs to be fixed.

The State of Alaska owns the railroad by the simple fact that they want to sell it. Because there is an ongoing lawsuit in Federal court at this time, if they were to sell the Railroad there would be a cloud on the title. The State of Alaska and ARRC need to give that property back to its rightful owners and remove the cloud on title.

I think the State can take care of it because the Federal government gave the railroad to Alaska, so these issues can be resolved in the State of Alaska. There are letters of support from Governor Dunleavy concerning this issue.

John Pletcher, has been involved in this issue for 20 years, practiced law for over 30 years, and is one of the landowners involved. He states, "I'm looking at it from a 10,000-foot view. In simple terms, 'They took it.'"

The Railroad easement was fixed on the Section Maps that were issued to people in 1950. The ROW was only for telephone and telegraph lines if they constructed the railroad. A letter dated April 16, 2018, from the Department of the Interior shows they messed up. The April 16, 2018, letter regarding the Alaska Railroad Transfer Act is proof that The Railroad only had a Right-of-Way.

John H. pointed out the obvious answer to all of us. The State Railroad is an instrumentality of the State and operated under the Department of Commerce and Economic Development. Since the State owns the land and all the Railroad assets, it simply must give it back to the originally patented landowners.

The Old Seward/Oceanview Community Council's website has a link to www.AlaskaRailroad.com for additional information.

Chuck K.—When the ARR was built in 1914. Patents were given to homesteaders when it was still territory. Up until 1982, there were no problems when the Federal Government transferred the railroad to the State of Alaska. The Railroad said they had an "Exclusive Use" of the ROW and started charging the landowners for use of their own land in the ROW for gardens, sheds, parking an RV, or any other landowner use. What we are trying to do here is make it so that landowners can live safely next to the ROW and the Railroad can safely operate.

Chuck filed legislation and the late Don Young said, "You're right, we never gave any land patents away. There was only a surface easement."

So, the issue before the Council today is the Long Trail. If a bike trail is built in the ROW, it is a concern to many residents because the City has an issue with safety on the trails. If the ROW goes through my yard, what will be the consequences?

We are continuing to work with our Governor's office and with John Pletcher for a State solution for how the ROW is to be managed.

John P. says the ARR has control over the State. The State has no control of this entity. Anyone can work on this Railroad Committee; we especially need tech support for the website.

John H. spoke to the Chief of Staff of Representative Sumner, who sponsored this bill, and who asked for information regarding the issues.

John P mentioned there is an additional issue of extending the RR into Canada, where the RR is representing that it owns property it does not have, which underpins the bonds.

John H said the RR bought a lot of land to build an extension through the MatSu. The railbed has been in for years, but no tracks have been laid. The Alaska Railroad should be audited to find out where all this money is going. They also want to issue bonds to build a new terminal in Seward.

Chuck K. said the Senate Bill 105 for \$70 million to rebuild the cruise terminal in Seward is in partnership with Royal Caribbean Cruises. It's subject to legislative audit, so they would have to agree to the audit. When Chuck was in the legislature he tried to get an audit, but the RR fought it tooth and nail because there are so many financial entanglements between the RR, tourism, hotel, and transportation industries. A bill is moving to require legislative audit oversight so that their budget and operations are transparent like every other entity.

John P. notes that the legislator from Seward said we are going to spend \$70 million for a dock that is for the cruise ships only and the Palmer legislator said the cruise tourists come to Alaska and do not leave much money due to the big corporate connections with outside interests. So, if the State of Alaska issues bonds, the State is on the hook for them. Read the book called "Alaska, an American Colony" written by Professor Haycox at the University of Alaska.

Doug S. started a discussion on the ARR Posi traction System.

Chuck K. stated that the ARR is operating as an independent corporation and a land holding company that also owns a railroad.

This item will be discussed at a later meeting. Further information can be found in these links: AlaskaRailroaded.com, [Alaska Long Trail](#), [Fish Creek Trail](#).

10-Year Review of OSOV CC Boundary – Joan reported that our resolution to adjust the Community Council boundary will include an area North of Klatt Road (currently part of Bayshore Community Council) passed at the December 2023 meeting and was turned into the MOA's Planning and Zoning Department. Their review process is several months long, followed by a public comment period, then they will bring their recommendations to the Assembly. We were joined by two homeowners living in the area.

Clean Slate Strategy and Housing & Homelessness – The assembly is still looking for low barrier housing and is evaluating Municipal area properties that meet their criteria. The site map for homelessness sites near or in our community council area. [See the link here for sites in consideration by the Assembly.](#)

Draft Position Statement on Housing & Homelessness in OSOVCC – Our position statement was read for the second time at our January 2024 meeting. Since no other Anchorage community council has published a position statement, Randy S. suggested that we hold off publishing it for now.

We will post a White Paper prepared by our community patrol officer, Jeff Childs, to the OSOVCC website for members to review and comment on at future meetings.

Safer Seward Highway – This project is for the section of Seward Highway between Rabbit Creek and Bird Flats. The map was projected on the screen and there was no further discussion.

Election of 2024 OSOV Officer for FCC Alternate Delegate and Secretary – Gloria Lyon volunteered for the position of Alternate FCC Delegate. By a vote of 9/0, she was elected.

OSOV CC Secretary is a board position that remains open. Peggy Kircher has been our acting secretary since the beginning of the year.

New Business

2024 Capital Improvement Projects (CIP)

Kevin reviewed the list of 2023 projects and asked if the members know of any roads to add for 2024. So far we will add Birch Knoll bike trail, John's Road Alleyway, and Brandon Street to the CIP list. In 2023, one half of Ellen Avenue was upgraded, and we look forward to the rest of the upgrade this summer. Please bring additional road issues to the next meeting for addition to the list, which will be submitted in May.

Liquor & marijuana licenses up for renewal – Brown Jug in the Huffman Business Park is the only license up for renewal. We were joined by the President of Brown Jug and there were no complaints from members to report. Remember to call, write, and attend the Assembly meeting, when these licenses are on their agenda, if you have complaints.

Announcements / Current Issues of Note

AMATS

Joan announced that a volunteer is still needed to report on the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions ([AMATS](#)) meetings and how their planning will affect the OSOVCC.

Community Garden at Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church – Located at 1612 Oceanview Drive. Joan reminded members about the Community Garden if anyone is interested in raising their own garden space this year, it is very inexpensive and a wonderful community activity. Please contact the Church for information.

OSOV CC Members only

Members reported the following concerns:

- 120th Avenue snow grading has caused one lane in some areas.
- Snow berms need to be cut back on Klatt Road at the exit of Value Liquor store.
- Division Street speed limits are needed to slow the traffic.
- Johns Road would really benefit from speed bumps, and/or flashing speed signs.

Adjournment - The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.