

Minutes

Northeast Community Council (NECC)

September 19, 2024 | 7pm

Creekside Park Elementary-Gymnasium

7500 E 6th Ave, Anchorage, AK 99504

Board Members Present

Murray Crookes, Vice President | **Dave Weber**, Secretary | **John Cunningham**, Treasurer | **Nate Martin**, Parliamentarian | **Stephanie Taylor**, Member | **Stu Grenier**, Member | **Mary O'Loughlin**, Member

50~ people in attendance and online.

Murray Crookes called the meeting to order at 7:05pm and provided a land acknowledgement.

Pledge of Allegiance – Murray Crookes

Board Roll Call – Murray Crookes

Minutes Approval: August Meeting

Mary O'Loughlin moved to approve minutes; Raleigh Alexander seconded. None opposed. August Meeting Minutes approved.

Treasurer's Update

John Cunningham: Reported \$1,714.60 in the bank as of September 19, 2024.

FCC Report

Monica Schwingendorf: Read the following report summarizing the Federation of Community Councils (FCC) Sept 18, 2024 meeting:

Executive Speaker Arianna Bellizzi: Discussed that the FCC plans to have a town hall series starting on September 23rd, October 21st, and November 18th of 2024. These events are for your friends and family who may not be sure why we dedicate time out of our busy schedules to make a difference in your neighborhoods. There is also an outreach recreation fair this Saturday, September 21ST, from 10 am to 2 pm, which is located on the Moose Loop trail. The goal of these events is to provide clarity and awareness of what community councils do.

New Business: A New Chair was elected Mike Edgington from Girdwood. FCC requesting budget increase, for outreach and training purposes to help other community councils. Anchorage 2040 Land Use focuses on fixing Anchorage's housing plan layout and non-motorized transportation.

Government Report: Marie Husa from the Mayor's office reported that they are working on a homeless outreach engagement team where police officers and social workers collaborate and work together, the main goal is to improve safety and build relationships. It was also reported that a new fire wildlife coordinator named John Glover will be helping us prepare for emergency wildfires.

Assembly: Chair Constant reported that they are working on a homelessness plan that involves future strategies, maintaining shelters, and continuing to provide resources.

School Board: President Hollman stated that the schools' districts have had enough bus drivers this year, and have adjusted bus routes in result has smoothed things out. Elementary school consolidation will likely begin in a few years. Some of our district schools may be affected but nothing is concrete.

Community Concerns and Activities (opportunity for community members to share concerns, requests for the council, and upcoming needs/activities, up to 2 minutes)

Janet Phillips: Lives on Peck Ave. Janet stated there is insufficient sidewalk and she has to ride her wheelchair in the street. There should be a sidewalk on both sides of the street. The lack of sidewalks is not appropriate and there are also a lot of potholes on Peck Ave.

Pat Coddell: Lives on Old Harbor Ave and part of the road has never been paved toward the end and there is a bunch of gravel there. The street also has no curbs or gutters. Pat stated we deserve having something put in place. Pat loves living here and came to the meeting and will come to future meetings to see how we can get this to happen. Old Harbor Ave residents had a block party and there were many in favor of improving the street and traffic calming. The residents also reached out to Forrest Dunbar and he did not have it on his agenda.

Gigi: Has lived in Anchorage for 42 years. Lives at foothills east behind O'Reilly Auto Parts. The sledding hill and Windsong park is a complete forest now. The city should put a trail between Windsong and Chanhstnu Muldoon Park. We are also getting a lot of bears coming through the Chester Creek in Chanhstnu Muldoon Park.

Stephanie Taylor: Suggested a candidate forum for the next council meeting.

David Cristal: There are a number of kids living between Creekside Drive and Old Harbor Ave. The trail between there is not plowed in the winter so kids have to take the bus. Where the Creekside Elementary School area has gotten a sidewalk with lighting there have been substantial reduction in drug use within that area. To have lighting and plowing on the sidewalk along Creekside Park would be a substantial benefit to Creekside school and area. Also, through programs Creekside Elementary participates in there have been 100 kids learning to swim.

Dave Weber: Was asked to participate in a focus group with Alaska Department of Transportation (AK DOT) representing the Northeast Community Council. Dave shared with AK DOT the speed of traffic is a frequent concern at NECC meetings and distance between sidewalks and road should be increased. At Muldoon and Debarr there is frequent jaywalking and education is needed to reduce this, as well as there is a need to increase driver awareness. Dave also shared with AK DOT there has been occasional positive feedback on the Muldoon diamond intersection in terms of pedestrian traffic and there needs to be increased regard for crosswalk access in high density areas on Muldoon and Boniface. AK DOT is focusing on crowdsourcing safety data.

Stu Grenier: Recently was at Centennial Park and discovered there was someone unloading pallets from a U-Haul truck. A neighbor came over and there was a shouting match with the driver and the neighbor said he has a gun. Things are heating up with neighborhoods around the parks. There are people moving into parks and Stu is getting reports of chainsaw activity in the parks. At 6pm on Tuesday, September 24, the NECC Parks & Trails Committee will go on a nice walk around Centennial to observe and discuss the state of the park.

Legislative Reports (limit 3 min. each, including questions)

Senator Bill Wielechowski: The amount for the dividend is \$1,702. The dividend can be more however the Willow project is one area in which the State of Alaska is not getting a return. For every dollar generated from the Willow project a substantial portion is going to the Texas billionaire, Jeff Hildebrand. For the Willow project, the State of Alaska is getting essentially nothing.

With the AK DOT, we have been talking to them for the last year. The State did a really bad job last year. The AK DOT lost \$60M for failure to file with the federal government properly. Those funds were redistributed to other States. Also there are federal dollars the State got from the COVID-19 federal funds, but the State lost \$17M because the State did not maintain equity. There is also a Kroger merger going on and the State is watching that.

Sen. Wielechowski answered several questions from **Pat Coddell** and **Michael Taylor** regarding the Willow project and AK DOT. Sen. Wielechowski commented that the Commissioner of AK DOT was ultimately

responsible for misfiled federal funds for AK DOT and he should resign. Earlier in the year the Commissioner was also the same person recorded as saying the AK DOT was doing a great job clearing snow.

There were also other questions from **Terry Greggs** and **Chris** answered by Sen. Wielechowski.

CONTACT: Phone: 907-269-0120, Email: Senator.Bill.Wielechowski@akleg.gov

Mike Mason, staff of Senator Loki Tobin: Sen. Tobin is attending an interstate commission for higher education. Sen. Tobin has been working on the State equity funding issue. The federal government required that funding be maintained at current levels throughout the pandemic. Due to student movement, there was less funding allocated by the State to certain areas. Alaska is the only State in the nation that is out of compliance for fiscal year 2023. The state is ultimately losing out on \$17M. Sen. Tobin has restarted a caucus named the Alaska Children's Caucus. There will be the 3rd session for it tomorrow. Stakeholders are invited, there is a survey, and the Caucus members will work together. Please contact Sen. Tobin. to get involved.

CONTACT: Phone 907-465-3704, Email: Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov

Representative Donna Mears: Represents South Muldoon. Rep. Mears is using a framework discussed a couple weeks ago and is talking about outmigration. One issue affecting outmigration was the workforce. The foundation is that we need strong industry here in the State. Education, childcare, housing are really important to keep the workforce. Also there's going to be a lot more interest from kids with the Academies of Anchorage. The teachers are concerned because the flat funding means that the Academies won't work going forward because it does take more resources to do it. We've got Pre-K programs established and they are funded at half of a normal student. Rep. Mears wants to tie childcare and education back together. Rep. Mears is also addressing housing.

Terry Greggs: What about test scores, they are still going down? This worries me.

Rep. Mears: A big part of solving that is the attention in the classroom and lower classroom sizes.

Gigi: Taught in Anchorage. Stated there's never a time when this doesn't come up during election season. We can talk about class sizes till we are blue in the face.

Stu Grenier: For the Cheney Lake Park shelter the governor vetoed, was the reason the governor vetoed it because it didn't come through NECC?

Rep. Mears: The only reason the governor gave was due to preservation of the budget.

CONTACT: Office: 907-465-3438, Cell 907-632-6382, Email: Rep.Donna.Mears@akleg.gov

Representative Stanley Wright: Recently got a piece of legislation passed, HB 26. That legislation is all about healthcare and mental health. Rep. Wright's son is autistic and had to wait 6 months to get an appointment. They said a professional to treat Rep. Wright's son takes a master's and 3,000 hours. Rep. Wright created associate counselors position with the legislation so the associate counselors can start billing immediately. Creating an associate counselor position will clear the backlog in our state. Rep. Wright also passed legislation to improve and expand telehealth. It will also protect EMS and EMT workers.

Rep. Wright answered **Pat Coddell's** question of what new projects he is working on.

Ken Berama: What do you think will take to get a raise in BASE? It hasn't been raised since 2013. Will you approve a BASE increase?

Rep. Wright: It's going to take a holistic approach. Rep. Wright was okay with the band aid this time, and a lot of teachers showed up. Rep. Stanley noted the State needs to have some tough conversations and why there needs to be more funding when people are leaving the State.

Ken Berama: When you have 40 kids in a class, how do you think kids are going to be taught? This is serious business and the State is not stepping up.

Raleigh Alexander: How do you reconcile importance on mental health and concern on outmigration of the city with your vote to kick trans kids out of sports?

Rep Wright: The reason why Rep. Wright voted for it is because he has a daughter and she plays sports with boys and she ended up getting hurt.

CONTACT: Phone: 907-465-2095, Email: rep.stanleywright@akleg.gov

Representative Cliff Groh: Represents House District 18 which covers part of Muldoon. Rep. Groh stated he is here to talk about bad roads on/near Muldoon. Rep. Groh got two Anchorage assembly members and mayor LaFrance to tour bad roads. Rep. Groh wanted to let them know how bad things are and walked Boundary Ave with them noting the roads have very bad engineering and some are unpaved. Rep. Groh walked with the assembly members and mayor and carefully looked at other roads and noted there is heavy traffic to Muldoon elementary school and also walked through portions of Centennial Park. Rep Groh is concerned and there has been a very serious problem here and there are various components to the problem around Muldoon/Centennial.

Terry Greggs: The areas around Muldoon are not that bad. There are serious problems elsewhere.

Rep. Groh: That is true, but there are also very bad roads on the Muldoon. However, there is also a substantial movement of homeless people near Muldoon.

CONTACT: Phone: 907-952-3353, Email: Representative.Cliff.Groh@akleg.gov

Assembly Reports (3 minutes each, including questions)

Karen Bronga: George and Karen worked together to allocate some of the alcohol tax to go towards youth programming. Some of these funds should go to children and keep them on the right path. This year we had an incentive tax in the NECC area for housing. George Martinez has postponed the idea indefinitely, and instead try to give incentives to aging properties in Muldoon. Karen is doing everything she can to get trails on the east side and part of that is moving the Moose Loop east. She wants signs that point to the Botanical Gardens and Alaska Native Heritage center.

There is a 30% vacancy in the Street Maintenance Department. Two graders and three loaders have been ordered but they will be arriving next year. The Department has spent the summer making parts because they don't make parts for the current equipment. Also you will be able to see the plows coming through streets online. Someone also mentioned we don't have lifeguards for open swimming. Swimming in Alaska is a safety issue and it is super important that we get those running. Karen is beating the drum hard to get it up and running.

There is a problem at Bartlett High School where there is a big kerfuffle going on between the divers and swimmers related to the placement of new diving boards. It is interesting there was not a public process to discuss it prior to placement of the boards. State representatives are involved in resolving it as well.

There have been four recent pedestrian deaths. It is going to call for a state of emergency. We need to make a strong statement about having better crossings. We are also in the midst of budget season and we are supposed to go up to the Office of Management and Budget advocating for projects for this council and other councils. Karen will look where Scenic Foothills, NECC, and other councils have the same projects and advocate for those.

Community Leadership Updates (3 minutes each)

Carl Jacobs: The Anchorage School District (ASD) board has been focused on three main priorities. Increasing reading, math proficiency and college preparation. This past academic year there has been an increase in this. They've been working on career life readiness and that datapoint has jumped up YoY. ASD students achieved 2x growth in change in scores between K-2nd when compared nationally. As such ASD needs to look at a bigger

investment in Pre-K because our kids start much behind national peers. The ASD board is working on right-sizing efforts and looking at what facilities we can use. There is a survey available on this effort.

There is a pathway for all staff to advise of harassment anonymously. That is getting widespread use. The ASD board is also considering an amendment to participation in community councils in October.

David Christal, Creekside Elementary Principal, Bartlett Area Principal Group: Creekside Elementary opened a new playground. It is the first in Anchorage to offer accessibility for the disabled. November 5th is a remote learning day due to some schools being used as election areas. There are 109 openings across ASD for paraprofessionals currently. The district is shifting focus to teachers positions that are harder to fill. It didn't help that UAA did lose their accreditation for teaching degrees. Also, every 4 years teachers have to reapply for certification. David encourages legislation that makes teachers certification for a lifetime. The survey ASD put out is a very important survey and David encourages people to fill it out.

Nunaka Community Patrol, Aaron Pascor: Nunaka Community Patrol patrols all of Muldoon and Russian Jack and Nunaka Valley. For the Homeless problems and mental sickness – there is a lot more of that and they are walking around without shoes on. We have a lot of mental health problems and we have a lot more coming on the east side. The theft is going up because the homeless need supplies. They cut a fence open so they could get supplies up and it creates a problem. We would like more people to do the patrol and it's time for someone else to take over.

Maureen Ripsal, Rotary Club of Anchorage Gateway: Rotary has been reading with kids at Muldoon Elementary and has been bringing fun to reading. As a librarian Maureen wanted to challenge kids to read more. Rotary encourages kids to read to the top of Denali. But kids don't read feet, they read minutes. Rotary has agreed to match funds to those minutes. Now every minute a kid reads they are contributing to Children's Lunchbox when they reach the top of Denali. Rotary Club of Anchorage Gateway is a service organization and is dedicated to the Muldoon community.

Committee Updates – 2 minutes

Stu Grenier, Parks & Trails Committee: The Committee has been clearing the sled hill for years and Stu has been clearing ski trails for years. However now he doesn't go near the homeless camps that have moved in. At 6pm on Tuesday, September 24, the NECC Parks & Trails Committee will meet at Centennial.

Murray Crookes, Picnic Committee: The Committee went over the Spirit of Muldoon picnic from prior year. The Committee is going to have one more meeting before the end of the year. In addition, the Committee is open to entertaining other community events, such as a fun run.

Kyle Rehberg, Alcohol & Marijuana Committee: Reiterated that Baltazar's marijuana retail store hearing has been postponed indefinitely. The NECC Executive Board provided comments to the planning department that Baltazar and GOOD Cannabis was not in compliance with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between it and the council. It is a courtesy for pot shops to engage with community councils. Pot shops do not have to get a MOU with NECC. Our understanding is that in the future a MOU will be done with other potential shops.

Gigi: Why did the Baltazar hearing get postponed?

Kyle Rehberg: We do not know and do not want to speculate on it.

Nate Martin, Bylaws Committee: The Bylaws from 2016 were not properly filed. The Bylaws from 2015 are a lot more straightforward and easier to understand and follow. The Committee wants to make some changes and not include procedural items in the Bylaws.

Dave Weber: There is a request for council comments on Mixed-Use development within Girdwood Valley. Council comments are due Oct 15. If that is something we want to comment on, we can. There is also a Notice Public Hearing for removal of requirements for screening along major highways to be removed for a Spinell Homes development along Boundary Ave. The public hearing is on October 2.

The NECC Executive Board provided comments to People Mover requesting no reductions to routes within NECC and offered alternative cost saving suggestions. Also, the NECC Executive Board is seeking a Placemaking Committee chair from the council membership. Contact any NECC Executive Board member if interested.

Stu Greiner: Commented the People Mover did reduce service on Route 25, the most utilized route in the People Mover system.

Presentations

None

Old Business

None

New Business

Northeast Community Council Boundaries

Dave Weber: NECC invited the Anchorage Planning Department to attend this meeting to discuss with us the recommendations for changes in NECC boundaries. The Planning Department was not able to make it, but will tentatively make it to the next council meeting. They would like us to let the council know they are releasing information on the recommendations and are requesting a resolution from NECC in favor, or against, changes in boundaries by November.

Proposed Carpenters Training Center

Yoanna Cortez and Mauricio Letona: Presented the Carpenter's Training Center proposed location and design plans on a screen. The location is near Boundary Ave. and Glenn Highway. The proposal is to zone as a B3 for a vocational training facility. Mauricio is amazed to see the great community engagement at NECC.

Steve Ferris: What is going to happen to the Carpenter's center on King Street?

Mauricio Letona: There will be 20,000 sqft. for training in this building. For example, for welding in our current location we are currently on an old Conex to practice welding and there is water near it. This is a big investment by the Carpenter's Union.

Stu Grenier: Have you found a way around the issues of this building being in the flight path for JBER? This was one of the proposed sites for Begich Middle School.

Mauricio Letona: We believe it will be a little easier for us as we train full on adults.

Karen Bronga: It sounds like you are consolidating locations. What are you expecting to sell?

Mauricio Letona: We are expecting growth with our apprenticeship as a result of this investment.

Rep. Mears: Are you going to provide kids an opportunity?

Mauricio Letona: Yes we have a program called career connections. In Los Angeles we have a contest where three different high schools compete. We need a center to do that first. This building is our start.

Terry Greggs: Can you do that tiny home program here in Anchorage?

Mauricio Letona: Yes, it depends. That would be a goal though.

Rep. Mears: Are you looking to have this presented to us for community requirements, do you need a resolution?

Yoanna Cortez: Yes, we have a pre application meeting requirement that this meeting fulfills.

Melissa Branch: If you are going to provide a resolution of support we would appreciate that.

Sen. Wielechowski: Commented he is really excited about this.

Dave Weber: We can provide our comments or a NECC resolution at a later time, a resolution will be stronger.

Anchor Gardens Presentation

Larissa Wright-Elson: Anchor Gardens works from Chugiak to Girdwood. Anchor Gardens helps with resiliency in the food supply. In 2020, Anchorage's emergency food supply was actually in Seattle. Kristi Wood spearheaded the food forest in Chanshtnu Muldoon Park and is an inspiration. Anchor Garden's works by providing free classes and workshops and works with Botanical Gardens and library system. They have a number of community gardens around here and built one on Sunday in Fairview. Anchor Gardens is always looking for additional garden coaches to donate to neighbors.

Stu Grenier: There will be massive amounts of areas to put food if we can have the Muldoon trail.

Homelessness in East Anchorage

Karen Bronga: Email Karen where you are seeing problems with street parking. There are 40 tents and mailboxes on the trees and 50 trees have been cut down in Davis Park. The Homeless Coordinator understands parks are for all and is not willing to abate without a place for the homeless to go. Karen discussed the wildlife activity going up because of the camps. Karen has been successful in meeting with Fish & Game. This is impacting them and the fish stock. Farina Brown, Anchorage Homeless Coordinator, is getting a handle on what to do and has 500 beds coming Oct 15. She doesn't want to abate without housing and Karen told her that the city had passed an ordinance about distance from school and trail. Farina is well aware of this. There is a hotspot near Muldoon Elementary and there has been patrolling and moving on of street campers.

There is a new drug treatment program and new senior living home. There are lots of things going on to make things better, but we have to be patient. In regards to the Parks and Trails Committee meeting noted earlier, Karen mentioned the Committee is better coming to the Assembly meeting on Tuesday. The Committee needs to show up in force.

Steve Ferris: Will there be any strings attached when we move these people into hotel rooms?

Karen Bronga: No, there are no strings attached. Research shows that if you first get them somewhere safe and away, then you can work on mental health problems then you can work on other things. It's not a fast fix and we are doing everything we can.

Kyle: Ms. Brown has made comments on the homeless, do you agree with those comments?

Karen Bronga: From what she is seeing people are hunkering down for the winter.

Terry Greg: There will be restrictions at the Alex hotel. No drinking and no drugging. People who run the hotel run a tight ship. Those formerly homeless at the Alex Hotel and from the Housing First program have a very high success rate getting into rent paid housing. Housing is a start, but treatment is also needed.

Karen Bronga: Agreed with Terry's comments that we appear to be on an upward trajectory.

Roger Barley: Clients of his spent lots of money to clean up after people were allowed into houses during the pandemic. There is a lot of money being spent to clean this up. Roger wants to help clean up. Roger noted if you want to know why people are leaving the city of Anchorage it's because of these kinds of problems.

Karen Bronga: In and out of the emergency room has a very high cost. Hemmings' house is making amazing progress. This is my home and I am going to fight for it.

There was also much dialogue between **Karen Bronga, Roger Barley, Terry Greg, Steve Ferris,** and others present.

Community Announcements:

Nate Martin: Noted anyone can propose a resolution and if any council member wants to come forward and propose one this Executive Board is happy to work with you.

Murray Crookes adjourned the meeting at 9:12 pm.

Upcoming NECC meeting: Thursday, October 17, 2024, at Creekside Elementary

**Respectfully Submitted,
Dave Weber, Secretary**