

Eagle River Valley Community Council Meeting
Wednesday, October 9, 2024 6:30pm
REGULAR MEETING
Alpenglow Elementary School
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Call to order by Julie Jessen at 6:30pm. Quorum was established.

Meeting documents are here: <http://www.communitycouncils.org/servlet/viewfolder?id=4549>

Approve Minutes: Motion by Alex Jorgensen, seconded by Pete Panarese to approve September 11, 2024 meeting minutes. Approved by unanimous vote.

Anchorage Fire Dept: Captain Green, Station 11 reported.

- With colder weather and people starting to use fireplaces, be sure to check smoke detectors and batteries. At least five fatalities this year were because of non-working smoke detectors.
- Clean and inspect heating systems, and clean fireplaces and flues.
- Sign up for the Pulse Point App at www.pulsepoint.org to receive notifications about local threats in the community or, if you are trained in CRP, to receive alerts if someone needs CPR in a nearby public location.
- There have been a number of fires in Eagle River recently; these are under investigation by APD.

Representatives' Reports

AK Senator Kelly Merrick

- Eagle River Loop Road is scheduled to be repaired by DOT&PF next summer. The work on the cuts/curbs was to improve ADA access prior to road updates.
- Eklutna Dam agreement will restore Eklutna River to a point 1 mile from the lake. There is a concern that if the whole river is restored, it will increase electric and water utility rates. Native Village of Eklutna has started clearing land for construction of the Birchwood Casino. Construction is anticipated in 2027. This will be primarily bingo, electronic games, and pull tabs. The State's jurisdiction is unclear and the Department of Law has not yet taken a position, Birchwood CC has expressed concerns with alcohol and crime.
- Following up on natural gas availability, Enstar is willing to come to a council meeting to answer questions.
- Early voting begins October 21 (M-F, 8:00 - 5:00) in the community room behind the Eagle River Library, 12001 Business Blvd. Turnout for the primary was very low.

Anchorage Assembly Report: Mark Littlefield

- Mayoral appointees are being approved (including Sarah Davenport for the Mayor's representative on the Eagle River Chugiak Parks and Recreation Board of Supervisors). Kurt Kohlhasse has been appointed public works director.
 - Boards currently scheduled to be sunsetted will be extended.
 - Please check Boards and Commissions page for open volunteer positions.
- Eklutna Dam: The governor has signed the agreement but has approved further study of pumped-storage hydropower as a means to restore the river in its entirety by using pumped water to feed the river system while supporting energy generation. The agreement also calls for creation of a Monitoring and Adaptive Management Committee.
- Traffic department is working on a report on the dedicated bike lane downtown. No dedicated bike lanes are currently planned for 2025.

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- The Muni's capital project priorities list has been submitted to the legislature. Priorities include snow dispersal, multi-use trails, Citation Road upgrade, and Mac Center expansion
- MOA Assembly budget season starts Friday, September 13.
- A work session will be held on Thursday, October 10, on the proposed 3% sales tax ballot initiative.

School Board Report: Andy Holleman

[Holleman Andy@asdk12.org](mailto:Andy@asdk12.org), 907-742-1101 Extension 1

Andy was not able to attend, but sent an email update.

- ASD is continuing to look at consolidating some elementary schools to make staffing work more efficiently and reduce costs. ASD is a few hundred students below estimate this year, which means a reduction in revenue of approximately \$5 million. This is within range of reserve funds if cost saving measures are not sufficient this school year.
- ASD is looking at a \$90 million structural deficit for the 2025-2026 school year due to costs being higher than BSA amount.
- Schools will be closed on November 5, election day, as a safety measure. ASD cannot keep the voting public separate from the student body when school is in session. November 5 will be a remote learning day instead.

New Business:

Project Anchorage, 3% Sales Tax

Radhika Krishna. Executive Director of the Anchorage Downtown Partnership spoke on behalf of a coalition of businesses and organizations supporting a proposed 3% sales tax.

- Anchorage's population and tax base has been declining, costs of maintaining infrastructure are increasing and businesses are having a hard time finding work force and housing.
- Model for this initiative taken from other communities.
- 2% of the take will go towards property tax relief (including commercial properties); 1% to a single pot for capital projects, such as a rec center for Eagle River.
- ER Assembly Member Scott Myers has been involved in this effort.
- Approximately 20% of tax is estimated to be raised by people from outside Alaska; anticipating to raise approximately \$180 million.
- Proposed exemptions to the tax include food/groceries, rent, child and healthcare with a proposed cap on higher value purchases, similar to other Alaska communities that have sales taxes.
- Assembly will decide to put the proposal on the April ballot. The initiative would be packaged to include the tax itself and a list of projects. This will be discussed at an assembly meeting in late October or November for public debate.
- The proposal includes a sunset in 8 years, but that is open to debate.

Ballot Measure 2

Jeff Carlson, volunteer for No on 2 Campaign presented.

- BM 2 proposes to repeal ranked choice voting and go back to closed primaries.
- A no vote is in favor of keeping the current election system.

- More than 60% of Alaskan voters do not identify with a political party. With RCV, voters can choose any candidate from any party with no restrictions - a full buffet.
- In 2022, 52% of Alaska voters split their ticket (D/R).
- RCV provides for an instant run-off election - no separate runoff election required (example: Georgia Senate race).
- RCV encourages candidates to be more positive and focus on solutions to earn votes, not just focus on the party base. They want to earn the second choice votes.
- Alaska Common Ground will hold a forum on Ballot Measure 2 on October 20, 4:00 at the Loussac Library.

Resolution Requesting a Review of the Eagle River-Chugiak Parks and Recreation Operating and Capital improvements Budgets

Motion by Alex, Pete seconded. Motion passed unanimously..

Old Business:

Eagle River Community Patrol - Cliff Cook

Clif was not able to attend the meeting, but Mark reported kids breaking into at least 7 houses/sheds. APD is aware.

Platting – Pete Panarese

No new projects in our area.

Emergency Preparedness - Dean Cox

Dean was not able to attend the meeting but he sent out an email recently to gauge interest in holding a CERT training program this fall.

Education - Tom Roth

Tom was not able to attend the meeting. No updates.

Chugiak/Eagle River Advisory Board - Julie Jessen

No updates.

CBERRRSA (Road Board) – Crystal Kennedy

Crystal was not able to attend the meeting but provided notes.

- Starner Bridge project wrapping up.
- Winter prep-work begun to make sure equipment and supplies are ready and functioning.
- Muni PM&E department is finalizing design for one part of the Eagle River Traffic Mitigation project in the Cross Drive, Brooks Loop Drive and Centerfield Drive area. The entrance onto Cross Drive (near Pizza Man) will be reconfigured into an entrance only right turn from the westerly direction off of the Old Glenn Highway/ Artillery Road interchange. There will be no access coming straight off the Glenn Highway exit ramp, no left turn from the eastbound lane and no exit from Cross Drive onto the Old Glenn Highway/ Artillery Road. The main part of the project includes the construction of a connecting road between Brooks Loop Drive and Centerfield Road (behind Wells Fargo Bank). Construction is planned for next summer. There is an Open

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House on the project on October 29th, 5:00-7:00 pm in the Eagle River Town Center community room #170, (behind the Library). Or access the website at www.eaglerivertraffic.com.

- CBERRRSA continues to advocate for improving the Old Glenn/ Eagle River Road and Artillery road interchange and making sure the project is on the State Transportation Improvement Plan Taking the survey at <https://www.muni.org/Departments/OCPD/Planning/Projects/Pages/Long-Range-Transportation-Policy-Plan.aspx>
- CBERRRSA passed a resolution to request that the Assembly put a measure on the ballot for the District 2 voters seeking to raise our current mil rate cap from 2.1 to 2.4. This would be an initiative that only our voters will be voting on, from Hiland to Eklutna. This would increase the allowable taxing level but does not mean the actual budget will necessarily increase to that level. The current rate of 2.1 mils has been the cap for over 35 years and we have only had to tax to that cap in recent years but during that time we have greatly reduced our fund balance to keep up with higher costs, unprecedented snowfalls and the need for increased and improved services. If passed, the rate would not be in effect until the 2026 tax cycle.
- Crystal's term is up in February 2025 and Arlene (alt) term is up this month. ERVCC is looking to fill both those positions. Please let Julie know if you are interested in serving on the CBERRRSA.

Federation of Community Councils (FCC): Alex Jorgensen

- The Community Council 10-year Boundary Review Report has been released for public review. No changes for ERVCC area..

Chugiak/Eagle River Parks and Rec Board – Ruth Armstrong

- Mirror Lake Master Plan has not yet been shared with the Board of Supervisors.

Adjourned 8:20 pm. Motion by Tom Freeman, seconded by Pete Panarese, unanimous approval.

Next Meeting **November 13, 6:30pm at **Alpenglow Elementary School, 19201 Driftwood Bay Dr, Eagle River.****

ERVCC Board Members (Term Expiration) President: Julie Jessen (2025); Vice President: Tom Roth (2025); Secretary/Treasurer: Sarah Davenport (2025); CBERRRSA (Road Board): Crystal Kennedy (2025)/Arlene Rasic–Alt (2024); C/ER Advisory Board: Julie Jessen (2024)/Jared Goecker-Alt(2025); CER Parks & Rec: Ruth Armstrong (2026)/Jared Goecker-Alt (2026); Federation of Community Councils (FCC): Alex Jorgensen / Joy Webb-Alt; Education: Tom Roth (2025); Emergency Preparedness: M. Dean Cox (2025); Platting: Pete Panarese (2025)