

# Minutes

Northeast Community Council (NECC)

October 17, 2024 | 7pm

Creekside Park Elementary-Gymnasium

7500 E 6th Ave, Anchorage, AK 99504

## **Board Members Present**

**Ron Meehan**, President | **Dave Weber**, Secretary | **John Cunningham**, Treasurer | **Nate Martin**, Parliamentarian | **Pamela Raygor**, Member | **Stephanie Taylor**, Member | **Stu Grenier**, Member | **Mary O'Loughlin**, Member | **Monica Schwingendorf**, FCC Delegate

60~ people in attendance and online

**Ron Meehan called the meeting to order at 7:01pm and provided a land acknowledgement.**

**Pledge of Allegiance – Nate Martin**

**Board Roll Call – Ron Meehan**

**Minutes Approval: September Meeting**

**Raleigh Alexander:** Requested amendment to the September minutes in his question to Rep. Wright to be written as stated: “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?”

**Pamela Raygor moved to approve minutes as amended; Raleigh Alexander seconded. None opposed. September Meeting Minutes as amended approved.**

**Treasurer's Update**

**John Cunningham:** Reported \$1,714.60 in the bank as of October 17, 2024. John also gave an overview of NECC moving to a new bank account with the Federation of Community Councils (FCC). Donations will soon be tax deductible as NECC will be under the FCC non-profit umbrella.

**FCC Report**

**Monica Schwingendorf:** Gave the following report of the October FCC meeting highlights:

Arianna Bellizzi, the executive director of FCC, reported that if a council needs a meeting place or a zoom meeting room the FCC is willing to provide their space. They encouraged councils to reach out directly to the FCC. In addition, part 2 of the Town Hall series will continue this coming Monday on October 21st from 7pm to 8pm. The FCC also noted that they plan to start focusing on a range of policies such as retention and privacy policies.

New business:

The FCC has been waiting for Planning & Zoning. Typically, everything is wrapped up around February however, due to the delay, there is push back. The councils will have to wait about 2 months. Additionally, Mandy Honest from Clerk's office spoke about how councils are involved in the alcohol & marijuana license process and Mandy encouraged councils to reach out if they had any questions.

Jon Glover, a wild fire manager for the Anchorage Fire Department spoke about how they are going to focus on at-risk communities around the municipalities. This would focus on fire mitigation. He stated they plan to talk directly to each community council about this issue.

Andy Hollman, the president of the school board, spoke about elementary school consolidation. He stated that in result this would save money on spaces and make better use of staff and specialists.

Marie Husa from the Mayor's Office stated that there has been a contract for the homeless that is still under the negotiation phase for 200 awarded beds. Additionally, the goal of the mayor's office is to hire more attorneys for the prosecution issues, so far they have been able to hire 5 new attorneys in the last 5 months. There have been understaffing issues which is the reason for no responses via phone or email.

Assembly member Christopher Constant stated that there will be two public hearings on the budget this year starting in November. He also mentioned the budget cuts have impacted prosecutors and each attorney typically has 300 cases. They are now fully staffed and trying to get to cases as fast as they can.

There were no updates provided by the treasurer, chair, or old business. However, the FCC is seeking a new treasurer.

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

**Steven Ward:** Asked where this council stands on homeless in parks. Steven is president of his condo association and spoke about the homeless in Centennial Park. There is litter all around. If Steven has to get into another attack he is going to bypass the city and state. Steven has to kick them off the property. What is the council's board stance on the homeless?

**Ron Meehan:** We will have a robust discussion on this later in this meeting.

**Vicki Clay:** It's not this council's responsibility to handle the homeless. It's our assembly's responsibility to handle the homeless. It is outrageous.

**Ainsle Phillips:** Is a former NECC board member. She says what old is new again. After WWII mobile home parks were invented for this reason, to house people. But the problem is greed. Robini and his partner are responsible for this and they bought up a lot of mobile home neighborhoods. The planning and zoning department and the assembly needs to get involved. Ainsle said we need to leave this place better than we found it.

**Stu Grienier:** Stu has comments in last months minutes talking about people who bring pallets via U-Hauls into parks. The homeless outnumber us now. The police go in threes into the parks now.

**David Christal:** Reminder not to pile snow up on the sidewalks because then kids have to walk in the streets. David would appreciate it if everyone did their part to make things safe.

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

**Maxine Laberge, Legislative aide for Senator Bill Wielechowski:** Sen. Wielechowski attended a ribbon cutting for the Chugach battery system. It should make the electrical grid more resilient. Also presented a legislative citation to Pena Market, hosted at Centennial Park, and how it overcame challenges from COVID. It's been running for 20 years. The Bartlett pool is being monitored and there is a special meeting next Wednesday October 23rd at the Spenard Recreation Center to discuss that. You can still apply for an absentee ballot before Oct 26th.

CONTACT: Phone: 907-269-0120, Email: [Senator.Bill.Wielechowski@akleg.gov](mailto:Senator.Bill.Wielechowski@akleg.gov)

**Senator Loki Tobin:** Is excited to be in person at the meeting. Sen. Tobin needs input via public comment from NECC members on two regulation packages. One is related to the Governor's task force on child care. The second is the state board of education to the model project to limit cell phones usage within schools.

There is also public comment available for the way the state education board student representative is selected. The state education board wants to make it so they do not require the student to be part of student government.

Sen. Tobin was on a panel talking about brain drain and how we can keep people in this state.

CONTACT: Phone 907-465-3704, Email: [Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov](mailto:Sen.Loki.Tobin@akleg.gov)

**Representative Donna Mears:** Food security is top of mind. Donna is on the food security task force for the state. Rep. Mears did final report in August. One of the bills we passed last year related to the use of cottage foods. The laws on the state level have been relaxed now. There is more work to be done on the muni level for this. There is a slaughterhouse in Kenai that is closing. There is a meeting with DNR for a private person to purchase it and our goal is to remove barriers for folks and be successful with food production.

For energy, in the near term Hilcorp has leased it's drill rig to Furie. Furie is looking for natural gas in the Cook Inlet. Next month the state will look closer at that. In the medium term DNR is looking to make things more practical for land leases. In the long term there is work being done on geothermal energy, hydrogen, and others.

CONTACT: Office: 907-465-3438, Cell 907-632-6382, Email: [Rep.Donna.Mears@akleg.gov](mailto:Rep.Donna.Mears@akleg.gov)

**Representative Stanley Wright:** Passed HB 126 and is really excited about it. Its going to change how we do mental health in Alaska and it takes 6 months to get a mental health professional. Now a new tier has been created, Associate, and it will only take a week. Rep. Wright also talked about compact bills. Sen. Wilson and Rep. Wright worked together and ran these pieces of legislation through their respective chambers. It is going to ease the financial burden on military families and individuals.

CONTACT: Phone: 907-465-2095, Email: [rep.stanleywright@akleg.gov](mailto:rep.stanleywright@akleg.gov)

**Representative Cliff Groh:** Wants to talk about 4 things. Health Desk passed for veterans, homelessness, roads, K-12 education. Cliff got a military family help desk legislation passed. Homelessness continues to be a problem especially around Centennial Park. It was a privilege to take a tour about Peck Ave. Cliff knew it was bad for people walking on Peck Ave. but it's particularly bad for people on scooters and wheelchairs. Cliff is working with the mayor's office to get that improved.

Attended a luncheon last week. Class sizes were lower around the rest of the state several years ago and now they are going lower. Whereas Anchorage class sizes started higher and now they are even higher. There is a mismatch in understanding and funding.

CONTACT: Phone: 907-952-3353, Email: [Representative.Cliff.Groh@akleg.gov](mailto:Representative.Cliff.Groh@akleg.gov)

### **Assembly Reports (3 minutes each, including questions)**

**George Martinez:** The NECC area is served by east and north assembly districts. George Martinez and Karen Bronga rotate attendance at NECC meetings. Budget session is now and next Friday at 10am is the work session. Top priorities continue to be traffic calming. Muldoon curve is in focus and is on the priority list for traffic calming. You can see speed signs around the area to help promote calming.

George and the Assembly are working on bringing taxi centers to Muldoon and to other transit supportive areas in the city. There is a lack of prosecutors in the city. The administration is hiring prosecutors and the assembly will be funding it. However just because funding is appropriated doesn't mean it is spent correctly. We have to make sure money is appropriated then there needs to be implementation by the administration. Crime in the community impacts young people. All the resources available are needed and George worked on an initiative that did pass and will put resources into after school programs. The sprung structure is now at the port of Alaska and the municipality is putting it to good use. There are other topics George has to disclose but the 3 minute time is up.

### **Community Leadership Updates (3 minutes each)**

**Bryant Molle, Fire Station 6 Captain:** The Anchorage Fire Department (AFD) has Firespy going up and they will go on the Chugach utilities to detect fires. It will work like an automatic fire alarm. Also, Pulse Point can connect people to nearby people that are CPR trained. It is an app on your phone. There is a Pulse Point ADE app and

that can be a big help so people know where they can get the electricity and compression needed till the fire department shows up.

AFD has a mobile crisis team where the fire department rides with health clinicians. The health clinicians/mobile crisis team is housed at Fire Station 6. They are integrated and not on 24 hours a day, but they can get people help when they need it.

**Stu Grenier:** Do you want people to call you when there is a campfire, caused by the homeless, in the parks?

**Bryant Molle:** If you call us, we'll come put that fire out if the smoke is bothering you.

**Dave Ulmer:** There is a nice fire break out in JBER and utilities pathways. At another meeting this was mentioned. Dave would like to see that fire break cleared.

**Bryant Molle:** Wasn't sure exactly what Dave Ulmer was discussing as that information could be known by a different person, but would ask about it. AFTER THE MEETING Bryant Molle sent the following response to NECC:

Per email dated October 18, 2024 from Jon Glover, AFD Wildfire Manager: Over the last 3 years, JBER has been masticating all their boundary fencing to increase sight lines and enabling ATV/UTV access for their security forces, this may have been what the citizen was referring too. I worked on JBER as their Fire Management Officer before accepting this position, so I am familiar with all the hazard fuel reduction that has taken place over the last 6 years. Any additional location would be helpful and allow me to provide a definitive answer.

**Selina Metoyer:** Appreciates having the mobile crisis team.

**Vicki Clay:** Appreciated the fire department for coming out.

**Joy Boston, JBER Community Partnerships and Alaska Native Liaison:** Updated the council with the following report:

Your Community Council should have received notice of availability for a draft environmental assessment for a F-22 fuel tank project at JBER. The public comment period is open now until November 15, more information at the JBER website at <https://www.jber.jb.mil/Services-Resources/Environmental/Environmental-Planning/> (flyer attached to these minutes)

Air Force Recruiting Service is accepting applications for their Aim High Flight Academy. This is a three-week, all expenses paid (transportation, lodging, food paid by the USAF) flight introduction program at various universities around the country for 16 – 18-year-olds interested in learning about aviation AND includes up to 15 hours of flight instruction in an airplane!! Applications for summer 2025 are open now until November 11, apply at <https://www.recruiting.af.mil/Aim-High-Flight-Academy/> (flyer attached to these minutes)

**Jim Curran, Muldoon Public Library Branch Manager:** Has taken on an additional role as he waits for a new manager for the Anchorage public library system. Jim believes Muldoon is the best branch in the system. The mayor is putting together a nationwide search for a new Anchorage public library system director. Jim will see a presentation this and next week on candidates. There are some quality people and they'll be hired by October.

There is a 3 year lease at the Muldoon town center with a couple year renewal periods. The owner is providing extras such as new paint and other upgrades as part of signing the new lease.

The Muldoon Public Library has been working with the Anchorage Public Transit department to build a library along with them in a new transit center area on the east side of Anchorage. Talks are in very early stages and planning will start next month and they will be reaching out to the community next month. This body will be well engaged.

**Margo Bellamy, ASD Board:** There were two items that took up most of our time in past meetings. The Anchorage School District (ASD) Board continued with right sizing conversation and coming up with guidelines and rubric for consolidation, repurposing, and if necessary closures. There is a final plan between now and the end of December. The ASD Board needs as much community input as possible.

Rightsizing Listening Sessions:

12 NOV: Chugiak HS – 6-8pm  
13 NOV: MECAC- 5:30 – 7:30pm  
14 NOV: Hanshew MS- 6-8pm  
16 NOV: Bartlett HS (This is a Saturday session!), 2-4pm  
18 NOV: Virtual – 6-8pm

Also, the ASD Board had a lunch and learn at a high school and is looking forward to a productive legislative session. The ASD Board expects there to be a huge turnout on election day and schools will be closed.

CONTACT: Cell: 907-903-9820, Email: [bellamy\\_margo@asdk12.org](mailto:bellamy_margo@asdk12.org)

**Ron Meehan:** Noted Northeast and Nunaka Valley Community Patrol are not here tonight but their numbers are listed on the agenda.

**David Cristal, Creekside Park Elementary Principal, Bartlett Area Principal Group:** Gave statistics on the Bartlett area schools including that up to 200 kids are part of child in transition program. 78% are economically disadvantaged, among others statistics. Bartlett was listed as 2nd most diverse school in the country.

Also Nov 5 is remote learning day. Be kind to election workers. Nov 11 is an in service day.

**Selina Metoyer:** How are the new school hours working?

**David Cristal:** Stated he loves having substitute teachers not fill empty classrooms.

**Tom Davis, Senior Planner, Anchorage Planning Department:** The department is releasing community council redistricting proposals. The councils/public will receive information on it. Contact Tom at 907-343-7916 with questions. Public hearings are scheduled for January.

#### **Committee Updates – 2 minutes**

**Stu Grenier, Parks & Trails Committee:** Started taking hikes in parks and invited the public on facebook. The committee took pictures of the homeless issues in the park. The committee is going to be taking more hikes through the parks. There is lots of talk and we have met a lot of good people.

**Stephanie Taylor, Picnic Committee:** The picnic committee is meeting next Thursday, October 24, from 5:30-6:30 at Starbucks on Debarr.

**Vicki Clay:** The picnic committee is starting to gather volunteers for the picnic committee and needs volunteers. The committee is planning early so the organization doesn't run down to the last minute like it did last year.

**Kyle Rehberg, Alcohol & Marijuana Committee:** The committee is looking at drafting a resolution for support to the assembly to change zoning regulations for Marijuana dispensaries. The committee wants to see how we can extend the boundary for how close marijuana shops can be built next to a park.

**Nate Martin, Bylaws Committee:** For those who have not been keeping with this committee, the committee has been working with several versions of bylaws. In November the committee plans on presenting the 1st draft and a 2nd draft in Feb and approval of the bylaws by April.

**Ron Meehan, CIP Committee:** The committee had a meeting this fall to work on the NECC Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) list.

**George Martinez:** Confirmed the municipality received the list.

### **Presentations**

None

### **Old Business**

None

### **New Business**

#### **Homelessness in East Anchorage and Community Updates**

**George Martinez:** For the last several months Homelessness in East Anchorage has been an agenda item for this council. The new administration is here tonight and George thanked NECC for pushing the issue to amplify voices.

**Lt. Brian Feeks, Anchorage Police Department (APD):** Has been a police officer for 18 years. Has worked the streets and mainly as a Mountain View area officer in his career. As a department they are partnering closely with the municipality administration with some of the problems we are talking about here tonight. APD is 61 officers short in the city. The department needs to recruit. The department is still going on patrol. The detectives unit is strong. Crime suppression is strong. The department needs additional resources though. The department is trying to recruit and bring people here to Anchorage.

Lt. Feeks is the commander of the HOPE team and mobile intervention and other teams. He is also the commander of the police intelligence unit. The HOPE team is an engagement with a clinician or navigator and their duty is to full time engage into the camps. They are supposed to build trust with those in camps and connect them with resources. This resource allocation through social services allows them to further break things that may be causing homelessness.

The department cannot arrest our way out of homelessness. The CAP team deals with abatements. Lt. Feek is part of the CAP team. When their work is done Parks and Rec cleans up the area. The teams are working on strategic issues.

A person in this meeting made statements in regards to criminal activity. What can you do about it? First, call the police. When the police get called to a specific incident. For example, APD was called to chester creek the other day for shots fired in the park. The police have to add up factors in order to arrest. In this instance APD had enough. However, if APD cannot establish probable cause APD cannot do much. Every citizen in this community has constitutional rights. The police department will do the investigation according to the law. Lt. Feeks understands sometimes it may appear you are not getting the service you are asking for. However there is a priority list. Domestic Violence/Assaults are the highest priority and shoplifting is lower.

**Stu Grenier:** Where on the chain of authority was it decided to abandon the law that the parks are dedicated?

**Farina Brown, Special Assistant, Homelessness and Health:** As the homeless coordinator her role is administrative and is about moving the mayor's vision forward on homelessness.

Farina wanted to speak to feeling abandoned. The previous mayoral administration had problems with the shutting down of mass shelter and what was happening at a federal level. The city was not prepared for that issue and they did the best they could. What the current administration has been able to do now is to abate 10 camps.

However, there is no place for individuals to go. One of the primary objectives of homelessness and health is to stand up congregate and non-congregate shelters.

On October 22, 2024 there is an additional 200 beds being stood up. There is a collaboration between police, homeless coordinator, and parks and rec. There is no intention to arrest for homelessness. We are not going to arrest our way out of the problem. We are going to engage in abatement. We will ensure we have a process to abate.

This is the first time the operating budget of the municipality has something built in for consistent services. This service has historically been provided by the behavioral health department. Addressing homelessness is expensive. Homelessness is a complicated issue and is incredibly expensive and we have to create incremental change. Farina is happy to be accountable for the change that occurs.

Farina is happy to create the HOPE team. The HOPE teams often meeting people who are employed but also camping, as well as people that are victims. There is information that leads to arrests when you make those calls for service.

Being open and transparent is important to Farina and Farina moves through the full legal process. Farina has been in the city for 14 years and wants to see change happen. Farina does not want to BS people on this issue.

**Ainslee Phillips:** Spoke about the police department's recent actions involving a trailer and stated the police department needs a retraining. Ainslee heard gunshots and called, and the dispatcher asked *why are you calling?* It turned out to be a home invasion.

**Steve Ferris:** Is over 30 years clean and sober. Steve said, first we need to shut off the money. Steve said if you (the municipality) are going to give me (the homeless) money, food, and other things. I am going to use you. As far as alcoholics and drug addicts, if you are giving them money, you are not going to get them anywhere.

**Farina Brown:** We are not giving people money.

There was a discussion on SNAP benefits. That is available to everyone.

**Vickie Clay:** How much is this going to cost us? When does this end? We are the taxpayers. Also, if you've been a dispatcher and you have worked a 12 hour shift, the dispatcher was probably tired. We need to show our officers more respect.

**Matt:** Appreciates the police officers' work.

**Nicole Perry:** Called the police and they came right out to address a motorhome parked in Nicole's area. Nicole acknowledged it's a hard job for police officers and people that live in the area. However, Nicole's neighbors had to call multiple times to get more responses. Thankfully all our neighbors worked together and said you can't park in our neighborhood. Eventually the campers in the area were told they can't camp in the area and then the campers ended up in the park on Muldoon.

When should we call? Nicole told the police about the camp and they were still there. These campers knew the rules and how to get around them. What's the point? It was disheartening when the officers could not respond. Officer Burns was a nice guy and in the end it worked out.

**Lt. Feeks:** Let's talk about this. When should you call the police? If there is an emergency please call 911. When we are talking about car camping. It gives us a challenge because it's a public street. If you have a vehicle in the neighborhood and you think people are staying in there APD will come on and engage with them and tell them about how the neighborhood feels about them being there. The patrol officers handle field calls and then there are CAP team unit that may be deployed if the patrol officers feel there needs to be an escalation.

Call us and let us know what the concern is. A lot of people talk about the wait time. However, we prioritize our time. It could be hours before that type of concern is addressed.

**Selina Metoyer:** Not all homeless people are there because they want to be. Selina has been homeless three times. When her Air Force husband left, he divorced Selina and left her with three kids. Selina was fortunate enough to get a job and even on welfare she was a volunteer at kids school and hockey team. Selina served on many boards. Just because people are out there camping, it doesn't mean it's a choice. Just remember there are people that are trying and working hard.

### **Candidate and Ballot Initiatives Introductions**

**Cliff Groh:** Candidate House District 18. Gave an introduction of himself.

**David Nelson:** Candidate for House District 18. Gave an introduction of himself. David gave his cell. 907-444-1731.

**Andrew Grey:** Candidate for House District 20. Gave an introduction of himself.

**Donna Mears:** Candidate for House District 21. Gave an introduction of herself. Donna gave her cell 907-632-6382.

**Aimee Simms:** Candidate House District 21. Gave an introduction of herself.

**Ted Eished:** Candidate House District 22. Gave an introduction of himself.

**Stanley Wright:** Candidate House District 22. Gave an introduction of himself.

**Kevin Groh - Ballot Measure 1:** Kevin Groh spoke about voting yes on ballot measure 1.

**Eric Hughs - Ballot Measure 2:** Eric Hughs spoke about voting yes on ballot measure 2.

**Loki Tobin - Ballot Measure 2:** Loki Tobin spoke about voting no on ballot measure 2.

### **Community Announcements:**

**Ainslee Phillips:** Gave everybody a heads up on facebook messages and emails related to insurance scams. If you say yes, scammers are filing a claim on your title. If someone calls you, AI can replicate voice. Ainslee wants people not to say yes.

**Dave Ulmer:** Northeast Community Council is the strongest council in the city. Dave is against resizing the Northeast Community Council boundaries.

**Stephanie Taylor:** There are snacks in back.

**Ron Meehan adjourned the meeting at 9:01 pm.**

**Upcoming NECC meeting: Thursday, November 21, 2024, at Creekside Elementary**

**Respectfully Submitted,  
Dave Weber, Secretary**