

RUSSIAN JACK COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

6:30 PM, Wednesday, November 13, 2024

At Zion Lutheran Church – 2100 Boniface Parkway

Present: Ed Leach, Lori Pickett, Susan Heuer, Mercedes Colbert (Sen Wielechowski), Mara El-Khovry, Clayton Chapman, Carissa Silva, Daniel George, Nevin & Tara Blankenship, Bill Wielechowski, Kendra Kloster, Kathleen Plunkett, Kristi Woods, Dan & Sherry Wright

Present via ZOOM: Ted Eischeid, Daniel Volland, George Martinez, Remington Purnell (Rep Gray), Katy Giorgio, Genevieve Mina, Seth Tigarian (Sen Dunbar)

Meeting was called to order at 6:34 pm by President Kendra Kloster

1. Welcome and Land Acknowledgement We are meeting on Dena'ina Land – grateful for their care and sharing the land with us.

2. Legislative report (3 minutes each)

Sen. Bill Wielechowski – (Seat K) Election results are still on hold. House & Senate announced a joint coalition. 30,000 ballots still need counting – November 30th elections will be certified. Election reform is needed as there have been many complaints. Absentee ballots require a signature witness, but they are not checked and disenfranchise many potential voters. East Anchorage seems to be taking the brunt of school closures. 3 of 7 schools within 1.5 miles of each other are on the block for closures, all in low income areas. Constituent coffee December 7 at Kaladi on Tudor/Muldoon from 7 am. Question on why those schools were chosen – their argument is that school enrollment has declined (while in earlier years this was a more populated area). Utilizing the schools for other uses (like day care) rather than closing them has been suggested.

Sen. Forrest Dunbar – (Seat J) Seth Tigarian provided a report. Won re-election by a significant margin. Getting policy in order for the next session.

Rep. Genevieve Mina – Seat 19 – Bi-Partisan coalition information. Affordability issues will be high priority for the upcoming legislative session. [Linktr.ee/repmina](https://linktr.ee/repmina)
rep.genevieve.mina@akkleg.gov 907-465-3424

Rep. Stanley Wright – Seat 22 (Forrest Wolfe) no report

Rep. Andrew Gray - Seat 20 - Remington Purnell provided the report. Happy to be back in office. Spoke in support of Anchorage policy to require ID in restaurants and bars. Spoke about lowering costs of health care. RepGray.com for the podcast

3. Assembly report (3 minutes each)

Christopher Constant Seat 1B – no report

Daniel Volland Seat 1L – Approved several job openings with LaFrance administration appointees. Rounding out their budget, which included in part to: Improving recruitment and retention in prosecutors office; kickstart a new grants team for investments, raising snow plow driver pay; neighborhood traffic calming; fleet investment for snow removal and APD. Some

issues they would like to work on include user fees at Mtn View & Muldoon Boys & Girls Club to allow access to those services. Contract with National Association of Police Oversight – re-invisioning how the public safety commission operates. Public hearing re: free parking with mobility impaired folks. 3% Sales tax discussion deferred to December 3 – what monies would be used for. Gas, rent, groceries, child care, etc would be exempt. This is proposed for seven years, at which time the voters would determine if they wanted to continue the sales tax in the future.

Kathleen had a question about the handicapped parking issue. Much of the time Kathleen finds most of the current handicapped spaces filled with people with temporary handicap passes. The ordinance will increase spaces and also increase fees for those that use handicapped spaces that are not legally parking there. Ed asked if there was a report on the downtown bike lanes. It is coming out soon.

Karen Bronga Seat 5H (Genevieve Kikukawa)- no report

George Martinez Seat 5I – Focus on vacant and abandoned properties – spoke about successfully removing the abandoned property, which is near another project Pete Peterson was involved in with the Little League. Project Anchorage meeting at City Hall. He is mailing out a community assessment mailer.

Daniel George – spoke about the city charter which includes language regarding a sales tax in the hands of voters based on a percentage. George Martinez thanked him for pointing that out. There are at least 12 vacant and abandoned properties within RJCC area.

Kendra – update on Williwaw Park clean up that we talked about at the last meeting.

4. School board report (3 minutes each) – Carl Jacobs Rightsizing ASD meetings Thursday, November 14 from 6-8 pm at Dimond HS; Saturday, November 16 from 12 – 2 pm at Bartlett HS (busing from Nunaka Valley is offered), Monday, November 18 from 11 am – 1 pm and 6-8 pm via ZOOM.

5. FCC report – Kathleen Plunkett – Open treasurer position will hopefully be filled. CIP training at that meeting. Townhall series on Guiding Community Councils: Leading Diverse Stakeholders with Vision on Monday November 18 from 7-8 pm at Wilda Marston Theatre, Loussac Library.

6. Manor House & Village – Tara Blankenship & Clayton Chapman – came to the last meeting and spoke about illegal drug and sex trafficking in their area. We want safe streets, drugs off our streets and the children to not have to walk past that every day. This is important – hoping budget goes to safety, violent offenders, DUI not to be set free. They are hoping to get the needles out of our parks. Feces out of our yards from drunk homeless people. The homeless on Pine Street has been removed, which lessened a lot of the activity. Criminal activity is assisted by less stringent laws on vehicles. Disabled vet plates are being misused, as well as permanent plates. Towing requires 24 hour notice (even when parking in front of a fire hydrant which should be an immediate tow or fine). Lots of expired tags on license plates, both Alaskan and out of state. We would like to see better enforcement generally. There is no policy that says the police can't chase motorcycles, but was told they can't chase motorcycles. Clayton has been

held at knife point once and gun point once. He has had a vehicle stolen that was located on Park Service land. Follow up on these cases (minimally checking for finger prints) is not happening. Crime seems to be increasing in Anchorage and we need to change this trend. Loitering is another one of the problems (Circle K stations) that may be a way people are trafficking drugs.

Daniel George thanked them for coming and spoke about growing up in this area. These are entry level homes and if we can't make them safe spaces, it doesn't say much about us as a community.

Ted Eischeid mentioned inviting APD, Office Fuchs who attended a meeting that had a very robust conversation. We had APD at our last meeting.

7. School Closures Discussion & Resolution – Kristi Wood attended the town hall meeting at Chugiak last night. Feeling ASD wants to set a cadence and that we will be doing this again in a couple years. Wonder Park was built the same year as Inlet View. Closures seem to be related to school performance. Expectation is that populations are going to continue dropping. SLC Structured Learning Classrooms is a portion of Wonder Park (similar to special ed) vulnerable students. SLC program would go to Mountain View. Wonder Park students 103 would transfer to Williwaw and 78 to Ptarmigan. It is difficult to form opinions about these closures / repurposing without sufficient information. A suggestion of turning them into Charter Schools, but they typically don't provide bus service or meals for students. Some discussion of the property tax / sales tax impact to budget shortfall. Sales tax projections are very uncertain (as we learned from COVID with tourism greatly reduced). Discussion also included adding statements regarding the youth population within Russian Jack CC area, lower income, English as a Second language, transportation needs of lower income families, and the fact that Wonder Park scored higher in the staffs detailed analysis for school closures.

Russian Jack Community Council worked on a DRAFT resolution to submit to Anchorage School Board and Superintendent. Testimony can be submitted via email and we were encouraged to attend a School Board meeting. Daniel George moved to support the Resolution discussed. Susan Heuer 2nd. There were no objections, so the Resolution passes. 14-0

7. Community Council Boundaries - will be discussed at our December meeting.

8. Review and update CIP list for 2025 – a review of the list occurred. Kendra will submit this list as presented and discussed. Lighting for a safe route to Russian Jack Elementary School off E 20th was added. Road and drainage has taken place on 22nd between Boniface & Glacier. Benches for bus stops by Chena & Pine. Lists are submitted to the Legislators and Assembly. Ed Leach approves the updated CIP list. Dan Wright 2nd. Motion carried unanimous. 14-0

9. Nominations for RJCC Officers 2025 President nominee: Clayton Chapman; Vice President nominee: Ed Leach; Secretary Nominee: Sherry Wright; Treasurer Nominee: Ed Leach; FCC Rep Nominee: Kathleen Plunkett; Trustee Nominee: Kathleen Plunkett It was noted that there could be additional nominations at our December meeting where the final vote will take place.

10. Neighborhood/Community Announcements - Those interested in Recreation and Trails Open House style planning workshops can attend Thursday, November 21 from 5:30 – 8 pm at Spenard Rec Center to share your ideas on trail improvements over the next 10+ years. Be sure to vote for Russian Jack Springs Park for 2025 Park of the Year.

Next meeting is our Christmas potluck scheduled for December 11th at 6:30 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 8:39 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:
Sherry Wright, Secretary