

Birchwood Community Council

birchwoodcouncil@gmail.com

MINUTES

BIRCHWOOD Community Council

Wednesday, January 8, 2025, 7-9:00 PM

Hybrid meeting: Beach Lake Ski Chalet

And via Zoom

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88131919316?pwd=RDA5ZGYrSlhORFhyOUtCM2dTRmJXdz09>

1. Call to Order: 6:58 PM

2. Approval of December Minutes: Motion made by Patty to adopt, Barbara seconded. Minutes were approved and adopted

3. Announcements: *(reminder please limit presentations to 5 minutes)*

a) FCC representative position is open- monthly in town, good way to get information and pick up mail

b) Open House Public Comments for the Glenn Hwy-Hiland Rd Interchange: January 23, 2025 5-7PM Eagle River Town Center Room 170

c) Mat-Su Transportation Fair: January 30, 2025 3-7PM Raven Hall Alaska Fairgrounds

d) Kelly Merrick Pre-Season Community Meeting January 14 4:30-6PM Sleepy Dog

e) Notification will be sent out by the S4 group for the Mink Creek Subdivision project which is a proposal for 13 1+ acre lots to be briefed at our Feb 12 BCC meeting.

f) There is a continuation assembly meeting tonight from 5-8PM, so Scott Myers and Mark Littlefield will not be in attendance.

4. Reports:

a) FCC Report: none

b) CBERRRSA Road Board Report: Matt Cruickshank – request to increase mil rate cap to 1.4. Eating up \$400K each season and McKenna raised their contract 25%. We cannot raise cap on mil rates as assembly has to approve. On Jan 7, vote to raise Mil 1.4 for the operating budget. (it passed so new cap is 1.4 Mil rate. Aurora Borealis and Starner Bridge is open. The bridge will be considered finished when paved. Matt will check on the Jersey barriers to see if they are permanent or not and reflectors will be added. Aurora Borealis guardrail is still on the list. AMATs added Artillery Rd for redesign and it will be a 5-10 year project. Now need to complete a project if on TIP or STIP. Chuck Homan now Chair. Sub-Committee form over contract-1 single bid with additional 1 year option. No other contractors, except McKenna as there are high requirements for equipment. Blake is chair of subcommittee. Looking at what other areas do—equipment, smaller areas would drive down cost? Not many companies have the equipment.

2025-2026 board: Debbie Ossiander, CERAB and Co-Chair; Matt Cruickshank, Co- Chair, Road Board rep; Ben Westveer: Secretary for Publicity, Lexi Hill PnR Alternate rep; Barbara Trost, Parks and Rec rep; Patty Friend, Member at large, and CERAB alternate; Val Jokela, Secretary-Treasurer, alternate Road Board

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c) Parks and Recreation Report: Barbara Trost-Nothing since last meeting as it will be this Monday January 13, work session Saturday January 11 over budget for Board of Supervisors and alternates, and that meeting is not an open meeting. Decided on 4 projects and they are tied to getting bids out early.

d) Chugiak Eagle River Advisory Board: Debbie Ossiander- if any major development issues will meet.

e) Treasurer's report: \$204.00.

f) CVFD: Chief Scott Fisher-none

g) Birchwood Patrol Report: relatively quiet, still a little mail theft.

h) Legislative / Assembly / School board reports:

Representative Dan Saddler-January 21 start of the next legislative session. Change: Republican party is now the minority. Representative Saddler is on the House Resources and Military Affairs committees. Pre-filed bills: businesses in AK charge for paper bill and should not charge, and limiting the number of State holidays. Randy Phillips noted our ballots lacked a line for write-ins for President. Education funding-significant increase in funding. Pension. Executive Orders-Dept of Agriculture is presently a division of Dept of Resources. Federal policy might affect AK. Eklutna Casino-no place to make comments-can comment now. Trying to gather sentiment. It is BIA's responsibility to conduct EA-formal process so far not fair. Asked Murkowski to intervene. COB tomorrow for comments. No requirement to put out? Effort to get through quickly. Brian Holl noted it has taken BIA-months to write and produce 1100 pages and now they expect the public to respond without enough time. Lawsuit against BIA what justifies an Indian casino. Matt appreciated Representative Saddler's help with Artillery Rd.

Scott Myers-last month-sales tax-amendments-Meg Z, Brawley-motion reconsider-special election-60-90 days for S versions-special elections-lower turnout and costly—lots of ideas-12 of them.

March 11th public hearing. Tax -snow emergency proclamation to leave vehicles unattended when plowing-Prop to move to November. Entire slate of appts-boards and commissions. Free disability parking. Mandatory ID check-restaurants and bars. Appropriation downtown library construction-Specific Chugiak-CBERRSA-1.4 mil rate passed. All ballot props went through. A lot on the ballot for April.

5. Appearances

6. Old Business

a) Upgrade Loretta French Ball Field Project-Dan Traxinger-

2019 started project took on project to refurbish-public-private partnership with PnR. Refurbished first field. High Schools do not support softball. Started with private-public field 1, then field 2 2018, field 3 refurbished. Goal to offer CHS and ERHS-softball fields. Increments of CIP monies. 1K per year to refurbish Loretta French fields. Kids drove the project. Hosted SB tournaments. 350 kids played. Financial impact ANC teams. Host Schiver camps. Gain of 15 scholarships per year. Church league Chugiak ER-6 churches. Ask for small bits of CIP-nice grant of \$250K-put back in, if Dan's group buys the materials for the score boards then PnR installed. Batting cage bought materials, and PnR built. Teams come from all over statewide. Proposed CIP-field are best in state. Dream is to build program with turf fields. Perspective of player-provide opportunity for young girls to play college ball. Perspective lower 48 have so much more resources. Girls here start season April. Remove snow off field at their cost. Looking for \$2M for all 4 fields. Concern about PnR budget. Spread out a bit more for 2 fields. Starting with 2. Brian-weight of turf materials. Maybe approach AK Air for empty combis...get them as sponsor. Matt noted there is \$700K for all year

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for all parks. Entire community-see \$\$\$ go as far as possible concern there would be large chunks of money going for one project. Projected out for all projects. Operating dollars after covid moved over. Voted on 4. Kelly Merrick said on SOA. Has to go to parks and rec. Projects are 4 for years out. Not all will be done. Have to go out for bid. Have \$5M to work with. Value on a couple of things 200-230K back into park. Put number onto volunteers per year—2000 hours per year. Huge up front cost—spread it out not so bad. Lexi-Thinking of other groups-mushers, skiers that have made great improvements- up-front costs are big, but overtime great benefit and a cost savings. She noted the ski trails replacing lights with LED's.

b) Powder Ridge West-area Eklutna develop land behind it-calls for high density development-triplex, apartments, commercial district. The person with concerns was unable to attend. Table topic for February 12 meeting

c) Nominate and vote for Lexi Hill as Parks and Recreation Alternate-nominated and seconded and she will accept-100% support.

d) Eklutna Village Casino-Debbie-called and talked to AK region DNR-not the assessment-if substantial substantive comments would trigger an assessment. You can't just say I don't like it. Your argument has to be environmental impact-science, law etc. Debbie's comments were around flooding as Peters Creek moves. Assessment does refer to flood plain. Brian Noll-development setback only 25' and it supposed to be 50' USGS report 1979 stated the average well output 2 gallons per min. Earthquake effected wells. Water access questionable. Road-would have very dense traffic. Highlighted-not enough time-Zoning is for light industrial, and the other 2 pieces are residential. Close proximity to salmon stream-Restoration of Eklutna River-2014-MOA statute stated 50' setback. Eric Boutin-helping with restoration project-make river set back 75'-wanted to reduce set back and he was not in support. Start with smaller bldg. for the casino and 24/7 for opening. Economic impact-response from ANC FD—it is Chugiak Volunteer FD, served by MEA, not Chugach. No letters of agreement- called police to let them know they were in EA. Based on data from other countries. If they pay no taxes to use fire and police, emergency response. Section taxes-out of all taxes collected. \$73K cost per patrol officer and that does not count uniforms, weapons, vehicles etc. Short officers right now. \$81K was base pay for officer which did not include other costs. Bring in so much sales tax—no sales tax MOA or SOA. Natural resources exploration chart wrong. Been proposed we pass resolution-ask State Atty general to weigh in, atty general, gov and mayor no response. BCC strategies: 1) write resolution talking about timeliness and no opportunity to give feedback. Ask for something like that. 2) write some resolution to summarize comments. Brian and his wife with their attorney sat down with Atty Gen. Continue to ask AG to weigh in on format. Lots of issues-Lexi-comfortable BCV concerns about development because of specific things-issues, as well as the process. Resolution- Julie who lives on Alluvial Street-unhappy no transparency from Eklutna-very upset. Debbie to write draft, Val send out. Comments on EA-Barbara-need official comments. Resolution won't affect EA. Emergency Question? Hard to do emergency one in 18 hours- better approach-clarify key points. Patty-not sure who has seen letter that Debbie wrote-personal knowledge and experience, was the focus of her letter so she would prefer not to use it.

Ideas: Glacial flooding, Glacial river-creek bed moves, propose big facility with septic next to creek-technologies can be used?-septic concerns-could not access, water table 7 feet, will Marnel hook up city water and sewer? (Who has water rights?) Traffic impacts-no bike or pedestrian. Old data, cost to upgrade Road access. No shoulder or sidewalk, assume all access via Birchwood Loop-double traffic Loop and AB traffic study did not take into account all the access points. Recognize Birchwood needs upgrading. (Matt reviewed Emergency Question-bylaws.) Law, fire, emergency

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response. Financial impact. Debbie work to write a resolution over general comments. Told our assembly reps that the modular unit is the casino. So many discrepancies, age of studies, cost to upgrade, impact not looked at for Julie-EA construction bldgs. Construction begin in March. Process is to identify what the EA says is not an impact and we say why it is an impact. Debbie to write resolution send out to everyone. Affirmed that we want Debbie to write resolution AG-vote next month. It will be sent out via Birchwood CC email list.

e) Birchwood Airport Master Plan-still under review of the FAA

7. New Business

8. Action Items

9. Adjournment: Motion was made to adjourn by Lexi and seconded by Barbara 8:46PM