

North Star Community Council

March 9, 2011

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Time: 7:00 to 9:10 p.m.

Location: Federation of Community Councils (FCC) Conference Room, 1057 West Fireweed Lane (new meeting venue this month only due to spring break)

1. **Call to Order and Approval of Minutes and Agenda.** The meeting was called to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. by President Matt Johnson. There was a sign-in sheet on a table near the entrance, along with copies of the agenda and several other handouts. The minutes of the council's last meeting (February 9, 2011) were approved with no objection (moved by Bonnie Jack, seconded by Xefirah (Barbara) Pepek). There were no proposed changes in the agenda (which Matt stated he had revised after he distributed it a few days ago). However, Bonnie Jack stated we would need at least 30 minutes for the bylaws discussion and that presentations listed ahead of it should be limited in order to leave time for the bylaws discussion. Matt stated that he believed there would be enough time.

2. **Officer Reports**

a. Matt Johnson, President, had three items to report:

- (1) West Anchorage Constituent Meeting. Senator French and Representatives Doogan and Holmes will be at Romig Middle School this Saturday, March 12 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
- (2) Assembly Candidate Forum organizational meeting, Thursday, March 10 at 5:30 p.m. in the FCC conference room. The Forum will be March 24.
- (3) Invitation from Bonnie Harris, President of the South Addition Community Council, to form a Valley of the Moon Park group. Anyone interested in participating should e-mail tavi2@gci.net

b. Andre Camara, Vice President, asked that if we did not finish the bylaws at this meeting, enough time be set aside at the next meeting to finish them.

c. Barbara Pepek, Treasurer, had no report because she had not yet received the credit union report.

d. Susan Miller, Secretary, reported that Tracy Fischbach, the leader of the C Street Garden Improvement Committee, has set May 7 as the date we will remove the old fence around the community garden at 19th Avenue and C Street (in preparation for having a new 8-foot chain link fence installed). Susan passed around a sign-up sheet for anyone interested in volunteering to help with the fence removal on May 7. People can also contact Tracy if they want to know more about the project: tracy.fischbach@gmail.com

3. **Legislative Reports**

None.

4. **Assembly Reports.**

- a. **Harriet Drummond and Ernie Hall** delayed their reports until after Bill Johnson gave his report on the municipal bonds that will be on the April 5 ballot (paragraph 5.b below). Harriet then described the school bonds that will also be on the ballot. There have not been any school bonds on the ballot since 2008. The three this year will total about \$71 million. Harriet also provided some more information about some of the municipal bonds. She said two other issues that will be on the April 5 ballot are: (1) whether to amend the municipal code to extend the disabled veteran tax exemption to their surviving spouse, and (2) an advisory vote on whether to require photo ID checks for all liquor purchases.
- b. **Ernie Hall** said the municipality is paying off about \$50 million in bonds this year and the municipal bond package on the April 5 ballot will total about \$40 million. So, we are paying down our bond debt. He then discussed the ballot measure that would allow downtown parking enforcement to be done by a municipal agency (probably the Anchorage Community Development Authority) rather than the police department. The agency would only enforce parking and only in the downtown core and would not have the authority to boot or tow vehicles. The current requirement that parking be enforced only by sworn police officers has meant that, when officers are not available, there is little enforcement. The downtown business community is dissatisfied with the current level of parking meter enforcement. The police support the new plan because it costs about \$125,000 to train a new officer and writing parking tickets is a poor use of all that training. Ernie said the Parking Authority no longer exists. When they enforced parking, they contracted enforcement out to a security company that was very aggressive. That will not be the case under the new plan.
- c. **Elvi Gray-Jackson** said that although she was unable to attend most of our meetings because of the number of other community council meetings in the midtown district that she must attend, she welcomes emails and requests for assistance from us. She is up for re-election on April 5 and would like to serve another three years. Her website (friendsofelvi.com) describes her accomplishments in office. At Ed O'Neill's request, she described her work with the "Take Back Our Park" (TBOP) organization. She said it was formed at the request of a constituent in the Campbell Creek Park area who was disturbed about the number of inebriates in the park. The group meets once a month to talk about how to improve things. They got donations for T-shirts and caps.

5. **Presentations.**

- a. **Valley of the Moon Park – Forest Management Project.** Municipal Forester Scott Stringer handed out his May 9 memo about this project, which concerns the forest area between the main part of Valley of the Moon Park and C Street. (Scott's memo was also distributed by email along with this meeting's agenda.) The municipal Parks Department and the Anchorage Responsible Beverage Retailers Association (ARBRA) are partners in the project.

The two problems the project is intended to address are: (1) the highly invasive Mayday Trees (also known as *Prunus padus* or European Bird Cherry), and (2) the homeless camps in the forest. Scott described the work going on to address the Mayday Tree problem, including his work last summer with a group of 7th graders removing saplings along the Chester Creek Trail. Although they are beautiful flowering trees, the Mayday Trees are not native to Alaska and, according to Scott's memo, they have "the ability to form dense monocultures along the creek corridors, displacing and out-competing native understory trees and shrubs." There are a significant number of them in this forest. Removing them (along with other dead and downed trees) and replacing them with native Spruce and Birch Trees will probably be a multi-year project, involving a lot of volunteer work.

Thinning the forest may also help with some of the problems with the homeless camps because increasing the visibility into the forest may discourage people from camping there and may help the police see illegal activities.

Scott said he knows some residents are concerned about removing too much of the buffer between houses and C Street. He believes the work will be done carefully to avoid this problem. One big unknown for the project is whether the Greater Friendship Baptist Church, owner of a large block in the center of the forest, will want to participate.

Scott had drafted a resolution of support for the project for the council to sign, but Mark Butler suggested that we wait until the new Valley of the Moon Park "task force" is formed and has a chance to discuss this. Others suggested that it would be nice to have a chance to read the resolution before being asked to vote on it. Susan asked if it would be possible to expand the project to the area around the C Street Garden which also has a lot of Mayday Trees. Scott said that might be possible after this project. No action was taken on the resolution (other than Bonnie Jack's suggestion that the trees be referred to by their more common name (Mayday) rather than *Prunus padus*).

Scott said he is willing to meet with anyone concerned about the project. Anyone interested in getting involved can contact Scott at 343-4716 or stringerst@muni.org

- b. **Bond Propositions on the April Ballot.** Bill Johnson, from Anchorage Tomorrow, handed out a poster describing the municipal bond issues that will be on the April 5 ballot and briefly discussed some of the projects. Gordon Glaser asked if it would be possible to get specifications on the replacement ambulances that are part of the public safety bond package. Gordon was concerned about how well the new ambulances would protect persons in the interior of the vehicles in case of an accident. Bill did not have any details on this, but said he would try to find some information. Information about the proposed bonds can be found on the Anchorage Tomorrow website: www.AnchorageTomorrow.org

- c. **Emergency Watch – A Neighborhood Preparedness Program.** Xefirah Pepek and Dawn Brantley briefly described the municipality’s Emergency Watch program. Xefirah said she attended one of the training programs and has organized her neighborhood. Dawn is the PIO & Community Preparedness Manager in the Office of Emergency Management. The Emergency Watch program was developed to help residents be able to take care of themselves for several days after an emergency occurs (before emergency services can reach our neighborhoods). The next training programs will be on March 17 and 19. There will also be a Ham Radio training course in April.

5. **Old and New Business.**

- a. NSCC Bylaws Revision. The changes in the bylaws proposed by the bylaws committee (Andre Camara, Bonnie Jack and Susan Miller) were discussed at last month’s meeting and a few changes were made. Both sets of changes are described in the minutes of the February 9 meeting. The revised draft of the bylaws was distributed to council members by email on February 14 with a notice that all the changes would be voted on at this month’s meeting (March 9).

Andre Camara explained that the amendment process started last fall because of the issue that arose at last May’s election of officers concerning the meaning of the phrase “the last 12 months” in the paragraph about who is eligible to vote. When the individuals who volunteered to work on this reviewed the rest of the bylaws, they found some grammatical mistakes, redundancies and some proposed alternative language (with question marks) that had apparently never been adopted. Andre spent several minutes explaining both the original proposal and the changes made at the February 9 meeting. Council members adopted a few additional changes.

During the discussion of section VI on membership, Baxter Gamble asked whether employees of businesses located in the council area should be eligible for membership. Andre responded that the employees would be eligible for membership in the council in the area where they live, not where they work. Mark Butler confirmed that that is the policy followed by other community councils too. Baxter asked how representatives of non-profit organizations are different. The answer was that a non-profit organization located in the council area gets just one representative.

The revision of Article VIII on Voting makes it clear that in order to vote for officers (or anything else) at the May meeting, a person must be eligible for membership (under Article VI) and must have attended and filled out the sign-in register at at least one meeting during the prior 11 months (June through April).

There was some discussion of Article X on Officers. Mark asked about section 5 on “Meetings of the Officers.” Section 5.A currently states: “The Officers shall meet at least monthly and all meetings will be open to the general membership.” At the February council meeting, the group agreed that “shall” should be changed

to “should.” It was also noted at that meeting that this has not been happening and Bonnie had suggested that it should be happening. At the March meeting, Matt objected to the suggestion that he had not been holding meetings he should have been holding. He explained that he interpreted the monthly general membership meetings as satisfying the “officer meeting” requirement. This led to a discussion about how to change the language in order to make it clearer that the “officer meetings” in Article X.5 are separate from the “general membership meetings” discussed in Article VII.A. The group finally agreed on two changes:

- (1) In Article X.1.A, the language “and shall act as the Executive Committee” was added after the list of the council’s officers.
- (2) In Article X.5.A, the language “(Executive Committee)” was added after “The officers.”

The term “Executive Committee” comes from Article VII.A which states that special meetings of the general membership “may be called by the Executive Committee (the officers)...”

In Article XIII (Amendments and Additional Procedures), Gordon Glaser suggested that the words “the latest edition of” be added before “Roberts Rules of Order” in paragraph B. There was no objection to this amendment.

Mark asked that page numbers be added. Harriet also suggested that the spelling of Gordon’s name be corrected in the list of officers at the end of the bylaws.

Gordon moved that the bylaws be adopted as amended. Mark seconded the motion. Gordon said the changes made this evening are not major, so there should be no need to circulate the draft again and postpone the vote to the April meeting. The amended bylaws were adopted by unanimous consent.

Andre will make the changes agreed to this evening and forward the revised bylaws to Matt, who will send them to the Federation of Community Councils office. Bonnie also indicated that the new bylaws need to be sent to the Planning Department.

- b. Neighborhoods USA (NUSA) Opportunities. Mark Butler handed out a booklet about the Neighborhoods USA conference that will be held in Anchorage on May 25-28 and asked for volunteers. Gordon Glaser said the last such conference in Anchorage was in the 1980’s. Kep Pierce said it was in 1989. Bonnie Jack volunteered to ask the Byzantine Church on Arctic about the possibility of using their facility for a dinner for the group that will be touring our area. Call Mark at 276-6017 to volunteer or find out more about this event.
- c. Nomination of Officers. Gordon asked if any of the current officers were interested in running for another term. Matt said that after serving as president for three years, he does not wish to run again. Barbara (Xefirah) said she would like to continue as treasurer, so Gordon nominated Barbara for that office. Susan said she would rather not continue as secretary. Andre said he was willing to continue as Vice President. Gordon nominated Andre for that office.

- d. Spenard Road Redesign Task Force. Harriet described the new task force that she and Ernie are creating to work on the Spenard Road redesign (following up on all the general public meetings they held last year and earlier this year). The task force is charged with making a recommendation to the Mayor and Assembly regarding the design of an upcoming rebuild of the portion of Spenard Road from Hillcrest Drive to 30th Avenue. Design considerations will be aimed at improving this section of roadway for area residents, shoppers and Spenard Road businesses. Designs for consideration will include three major options: 3-lane, 4-lane and minimal-cost-4-lane upgrades. Included in the process will be consideration of safety upgrades, better access to parking, wider pedestrian walkways and crosswalks, bicycle lanes, landscaping, and improved traffic flow.

Harriet and Ernie are asking for three or four volunteers from each community council in the area who are willing to meet five times during April and May. They will then reduce the number of members to two from each council. The meetings will take place every-other Wednesday from 5 to 6 p.m. at the Municipality's Project Management and Engineering office at 4700 Elmore Road. The following individuals volunteered from our council: Gordon Glaser, Mark Butler, Baxter Gamble, Ed O'Neill, and Matt Johnson.

6. **Candidate Statements.**

Two of the candidates for West Anchorage Assembly Seat E (Liz Vazquez and Harriet Drummond) each spoke for a few minutes about their qualifications and why they would like to be elected on April 5. There will be a candidate debate on March 24 at the Spenard Community Recreation Center.

7. **Next Meeting:** Wednesday, April 13, 2011.

Minutes Written By: Susan Miller