

Spenard Community Council Meeting

Wednesday, October 2, 2013 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Spenard Recreation Center, 2020 W 48th Ave.

1. Minutes and Agenda Approval – *Bob Auth*

- Agenda Amendments
 - Correction: the street identified on page 2 should be **Brookside** Drive, not **Brookline**.
 - Request from Chris Wood, DOWL HKM to talk about the Dowling Road reconstruction.
- September meeting minutes were approved with the following correction: John Weddleton purchased the “old car wash” not the “old gas station.”
- Announcements
 - Per the presentation last month, Pop Carr Park is recruiting a VIP “Very Important Parks” Committee to talk about how best to spend funds to upgrade the park. Contact the Parks & Rec Department for more information.

2. Legislative report – *Rep. Chris Tuck*

- Not in session, but there have been several committee meetings and hearings. Rep. Tuck participates in energy and education committee discussions in particular.
- **The Anchorage Caucus** meeting in the Loussac Library assembly chambers, November 18, 5-10 p.m., to discuss energy. There will also be one in December on education.
- **Ethics committee** has also been meeting over the summer – Facebook, staff issues, “every door direct” now available for legislative districts, post office will deliver to every address in a district, but figuring out what to do
- **Redistricting** still in progress. Hoping to have final district lines in November.
- **The Legislative Information Office** downtown is currently 716 West 4th Avenue, will be moving across the street temporarily due to office renovations. Phone and e-mail are still the same, the staffing plan may be lessened due to lack of space, but the office will still be open and available.
- *Question:* what is the status of the **Library Improvement** budget item? The total requested was around \$60 million, which seemed above and beyond standard repairs. The state is facing a leaner budget because of the new oil tax system, so many projects have taken a hit.
- *Comment from a member:* the **Governor’s Airport Advisory Commission** is supposed to meet 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. This is not accessible to the public. It will be held in the Susitna room of the south terminal, past security and very far from parking. This is supposed to be a public advisory board, but is mainly state staff. The meetings should be better advertised, better noticed about the agenda and actually made “public” in good faith.
The state has also changed AAC Title 17 regarding the Anchorage airport, and he feels that this change was unconstitutional (Alaska constitution) and it is impossible to enforce.
 - Rep. Tuck agreed that the Susitna room is not very accessible, and will follow up with the member about the Title 17 issues.

3. Airport Report – *Zaramie Lindseth, Planning Manager at ANC*

See following handout

- **Airport Master Plan:** The Airport’s draft master plan was revealed at a meeting on September 12, including the preferred alternatives (a combination of 4 of the 5 alternatives presented). Comments are due on this plan on October 10.
The next public open house will likely be in December, and available on the website. See *handout for more specific information about the next meetings.*
 - Bob pointed out (as a participant in the airport meetings) that one of the alternatives still being considered is eliminating the preferential runway plan (in which planes do not take off heading east, minimizing the amount of noise over the neighborhoods) that was agreed on by the airport and the neighborhood. He encourages members, especially those living in that area, to express concern about this. Earlier this year the Spenard CC

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- passed a resolution in favor of keeping the preferential runway system, regardless of which alternative was chosen.
- A member asked what the opinion is of the Municipality (Mayor Sullivan, Steve Strait, Dept. of Transportation). Steve was present and answered that the Muni has not taken a position on this issue at this time, because despite being in the Anchorage boundaries, all of the airport land is state land.
- **The Part 150 Noise Study** meetings are continuing, and there will be another public meeting in November/December. They will be noticed appropriately when the final date is set.
- **The Lake Hood Tie-Down construction project** is still in progress.
- There was a **Lake Hood Users Group** meeting recently.
 - A member commented that there were 55 people at the meeting, but only 6 pilots (the rest being state staff, FAA staff, airport staff, and contractors). He would like to see a meeting in the evening, not during the work day, to make it easier for interested pilots to attend. Zaramie agreed that it is unfortunate that there were so few pilots, and will bring the comments back to the airport.
 - He also expressed concern about pollution in Lake Hood, creating bad smells and concern about what it is in the water. He would like to know what will be done about this, and that the airport is investigating this. Zaramie will bring this comment back to the airport.

4. Westside Community Patrol Grant – *Bob Auth*

- **Security Cameras:** Bob gave the brief update that the cameras have been purchased, are being installed and still need to be activated and turned on. The Spenard CC is still looking for people to help determine the protocols for monitoring and passing on information.
- **Sidewalk Safety:** A member is concerned about the amount of trash and people hanging out along 36th, particularly between Arctic Blvd. and Cope St., she estimates about 10 to 15 regulars, in addition to a great deal of trash. She and her family encountered some belligerent people while walking one evening. Another member who lives on 36th agreed it is an issue.

5. Assembly Reports – *Ira Perman*

- **City Budget:** October is “budget season” and the Muni is building the budget for the coming year. More on this soon, including public hearings.
- **Legislative Priority List:** The 2014 Capital Improvement Project Priorities list has been submitted by Spenard CC, and will be considered with all of the city's requests and submitted to the legislature.
- **Taxi and Towing Ordinances:** The Muni is working on a taxi ordinance, including more potential cab stands particularly for handicap accessible spots. Ira was not aware of the level of concern in Spenard about this issue, but that Downtown and Chugiak/Eagle River are having a variety of issues.
 - Two cab business representatives commented that they have been working with representatives with the Muni on this issue and have been frustrated.
- **AO 37 “Labor Union” Ordinance.** The legal proceedings are continuing, and the Muni is expected an expedited ruling from the Alaska Supreme Court on whether this law can be enforced or must be thrown out. More on this soon.
- **Police Officer Shortage.** There is unusually high retirement rate this year, it is the last year that retirement-age officers can take advantage of an attractive package. Typically, the police academy brings in about 28 new recruits each year, but with the screening process that has been closer to 20. Ira pointed out that there are a number of situations around Spenard, and elsewhere, requiring ongoing police attention, and West Anchorage is really not getting the level of attention it needs.

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- **Raspberry Court:** a proposed substance-free residential facility, job and skill training center along Raspberry Road east of Kincaid, on the north and south sides of the road. The GSA is disposing of this land, formerly FAA land, and the Muni is applying for this parcel for use for this facility as well as for snow storage. Next Monday evening (October 7), Department of Health and Human Services will make a presentation to the Sand Lake Community Council about this proposed plan.
- **3107 Brookside Drive.** [this issue will be discussed in more detail below] Brookside is one of the more picturesque streets in Spenard, but residents are concerned about a number of “junk” cars at the end of the road, blocking access for emergency vehicles to Iowa Rd. (about the width of an alley). Being an alley (ten feet wide) would give the Muni the right to tow cars. Ira feels that the Muni should be addressing this issue, and will follow up about it with Ernie Hall and Code Enforcement. The Muni has gotten numerous complaints all summer.
 - A member pointed out that the platting of the alley is not aligned with the actual alley. Further discussion was tabled until the agenda item came up.
- **In & Out Liquor (and other liquor issues):** The owners, the Muni and the Council are still working on creating a new conditional use permit for the In & Out Liquor on Spenard and Benson, including limiting the types of products sold (such as “shooters”).
 - A member asked whether similar efforts are being made for the other In & Out on 36th and Arctic? Ira pointed out that each establishment has its own license, even if owned by the same owner, but that the Muni is working with other liquor stores without conditional uses (many have been grandfathered in) to have a standard agreement which can be implemented when licenses are up for renewal.
 - Other members expressed frustration with the situation of homeless people in the neighborhood, the cost of providing housing and other services, and the resources needed to do proper police enforcement. The group discussed these problems further.

6. Clare House Update – *Ellen Krsnak, Catholic Social Services*

- The Eagle’s Nest Hotel was purchased by Catholic Social Services, rehabbed and is now open as Clare House as of September 10th, a transitional housing center with about 10 permanent housing units and 15 transitional housing units intended for families (mothers with children) and expectant mothers.
- Success story: a woman who was employed but going through a divorce and had two teenage boys was living in her car. She was able to move into Clare House with her boys (not having to separate them like in the old property due to space problems) and within 11 days they had stabilized and found new housing.
- **Open House** on Tuesday, October 29th and is always available for walk-in tours of the property.
- Catholic Social Services thanks Spenard for welcoming Clare House into the community, and also to Rotary International for their support.
- A member commented that he has noticed people jaywalking on Spenard Road and creating a dangerous situation, and recommended that Clare House let residents know that they should not be crossing the road except at intersections, it is dangerous in the dark.
- Rep. Drummond expressed that she was happy to have helped Clare House find funding for the new roof, and that that could be part of the capital budget.

7. Long House Update – *John Spurbeck, Anchorage Community Mental Health Services*

- John explained some of the background on the project, that an opportunity had come up a couple years ago for ACMHS to purchase the Long House Hotel on Wisconsin and Spenard. They have gone through feasibility studies, possible rehabilitation costs and

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converting it from a hotel to individual housing units. There are currently 54 units in the building, and are looking at around 50 rehabilitated units.

- There is more information on the ACMHS website, www.acmhs.com.
- Regarding the previous discussion, ACMHS is pursuing this project as part of their overall mission to help support people in the community particularly dealing with substance abuse and mental health issues. Projects like this also provide affordable housing in the community which is an ongoing problem in Anchorage particularly for low-cost basic housing. ACMHS has several housing projects in town but are mostly piecemeal, “scattered-site” properties and this is an opportunity to offer more services onsite in one place. It is also on multiple bus lines which is convenient for the intended residents.
- Most recently, the determination made by the Muni about the zoning classification of the proposed project shows that the project is allowed under current zoning as a residential multi-family housing property.
- Going forward, ACMHS is continuing to look for capital funding to acquire the site and complete rehabilitations. Following that, they would seek operations funding to manage the site. This funding needs to be secured in order for the project to move forward. As of now, they are tentatively planning to acquire the site around October 2014.
 - *Question:* what is the current estimated cost for this project, given the condition of the building? ACMHS has been working with contractors and developers to get estimates. The acquisition cost would be around \$3.3 million, with another \$1.6 million for rehabilitation of the units and the building overall. Sources might include Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, federal housing grants, possible foundation funding.
 - *Question:* why not just provide rent subsidies, or put the money elsewhere? John replied that it is part of ACMHS’s mission to provide housing support and other services to people with mental health issues. Part of the idea is to provide more support to people dealing with mental illness and help them to recover as well as remaining closer to family.
- John anticipates as the project goes forward, there will be ongoing community dialogue especially as more details become clear. ACMHS will continue to be engaged with the Community Councils and members of the public.
 - A member commented that neighbors do get frustrated with organizations who build housing projects in their areas and end up with situations in which people are not being good neighbors. This makes them wary of new projects come into their area.
 - Another member is concerned about the potential for more violence in the community with having more people with mental illness. John responded that part of the benefit of housing with access to supportive services is to help people stabilize and work on their treatment goals.
 - Another member asked whether the original asking price was actually \$1 million, not over \$3 million. To John’s knowledge, the asking price was always around \$3.3 million by the owner. He also answered clarifying questions about how funds can be used, whether it needs to be returned to the funder if it is not used for the original purpose (in covenants). The member also commented that the state should build facilities in other areas of the state, where many people are coming from, and why they could not be living closer to their families.

8. Brookside Drive Property Complaints – *Brooke Blessing, resident on Brookside*

- Brooke has been in Spenard for about 10 years. A property near her on Brookside Drive (3107 Brookside) has prompted her to make a complaint to Code Enforcement re: the condition of the property. She has contacted the Muni (Code Enforcement says “our hands

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are tied”) and her Assembly member and has not gotten sufficient response. Brookside Drive is off Northern Lights, near Fish Creek.

- Specific complaints: the number of cars on the property, the condition of the cars (including blood on exteriors, trash in the cars, drug activity, etc.). There are people burning trash, people living in the cars, and concern about the number of people living on the property. There are criminal issues, safety issues and zoning violations with this property.
- Brooke is increasingly frustrated with this situation and comes the Council to ask for help.
- Another neighbor on Iowa St. is also concerned and has been watching this situation getting worse for two years. He has talked with the Muni and found out that part of what should be the alley is actually private property due to a platting error.
- The amount of illegal activity, petty thefts in other people’s cars, and a great deal of other suspicious activity. Access from Iowa St. is limited when parked cars block the road, and has prevented snow removal in winter and people from accessing Iowa year round.
- So far, the extent of response is that the house has been placed on the CAT list for drug activity, APD is watching it, but it seems that nothing else has been done.
- Ira responded that as of the summer, Ernie Hall and Jack Frost (head of Code Enforcement) have observed the property and have talked with APD, but because of the issues with Iowa’s designation and location, it is difficult to go through the usual channels.
- Ira offered to get the contact information of the concerned neighbors and will set up a meeting with Code Enforcement to discuss this issue.
- Rep. Drummond suggested that a property near to her, Tim Steele and Ira Perman (in North Star) featured in an Alaska Dispatch story, has had an illegal car repair business and that they had to be persistent with the Muni and that based on an initial report of a zoning violation, they also found that there was a gun theft operation, drugs and other illegal activity happening. She recommends being persistent and even calling the Mayor directly to address the issue. Establish a case number for code violations as well as with APD to reference the same case number in order to build documentation on the same case. She will also put in a complaint on this property.
- Bob received a brief update from Cora Weaver with Code Enforcement: she spoke with the property owner and the house is in foreclosure. The owner reported that he has 11 children who drive, that he is fixing the cars on the property, and that he is aware that he should not be operating a business in a residential area. So far the foreclosure proceedings have been postponed since June, every two weeks, and this is postponing any action by the Muni.

9. Officers Report – *Bob Auth, Jason Bergerson, Allen Thornhill, Anna Brawley*

- **President’s Report:** (see announcements above).
- **VP / FCC Report:** None.
- **Treasurer’s Report:** None.
- **Secretary’s Report:** Anna is still working on updating the Spenard webpage. All recent newsletters and meeting minutes are available on the website.

12. Old + New Business

- **Arctic Blvd Reconstruction** (*Chris Wood, DOWL HKM*) The representative from DOWL was not present at the end of the meeting.

The meeting was moved to adjourn at 8:50 p.m.