

## ANCHORAGE DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Wednesday, March 1, 2023 @ 5:30pm – 7pm

632 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Room 155

[Downtown.c.council@gmail.com](mailto:Downtown.c.council@gmail.com)

### CALL MEETING TO ORDER

- **Welcome & Introductions**

Participants: Silvia Villamides, Richard Irwin, Larry Michael, John Weddleton, Jason Motyka, Bob Doehl, Daniel Volland, Daniel Makenna-McFoster, Emily Weiser, Matt Shultz, Joann Mitchell, Christy Terry, Christopher Constant, Jim Renkert, Sheila Powers, Jason Herr, Radhika Krishna, Chris Jones, Mark Griffin, Melinda Gant, Russ Reno, Victor Mollozzi, Alex Donald, Vickie Malvick, Kyle Lavey, Iain McPherson, Joel Wagner, Ana Fisk

- **Additions/changes to the agenda. Approval of agenda**

Silvia Villamides requested an addition to the agenda under presentations for Kinney Engineering to give an update on 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. signals and lighting. Their request came in after the agenda had been posted.

Melinda Gant made the motion to approve the agenda. Jason Motyka seconded the motion. Motion passed. Agenda approved

- **Approval of January 2023 meeting minutes**

Jason Motyka made the motion to approve the January 2023 meeting minutes. Melinda Gant seconded the motion. Motion passed. Meeting minutes for January 2023 approved.

- **Reports: 3minute limit**

- **Assembly Report**

**Chris Constant -**

**Daniel Volland – reporting**

- Passed recognition awards at last assembly meeting.
- Passed Resolution in support of state regulations for the Hemp Industry
- Passed appropriations of \$2million for accounting services
- Executed grant agreements from the alcohol tax to be targeted for: substance abuse treatment and training of social workers for substance abuse treatment, domestic violence prevention
- Juneteenth Day and Indigenous People Day, being added as paid municipal holidays
- Passed Government Transparency and Accountability
- Working with Chris and Suzanne on a project to make it easier for restaurants to be able to have outdoor dining
- Working on transportation related items – raised crosswalks for kids (on preferred school route crossings). Corridor studies – I & L Corridor study 2023 and A & C coplet Corridor study in 2026
- Leading interval signals – extra time for pedestrians to get across the sidewalk
- Assembly approved entering litigation to make the HR investigation of Joe Gerace hiring impacts on the municipality public.
- Would like to see an integrated model of the Mobile Crisis Team and Mobile Intervention Team operate. Both respond, when appropriate, to mental health issues currently. Assembly would like to see this happen 24/7

- **Senate Representative Report** – Loki Tobin – n/a in session

- **House of Representative Report** – Zach Fields – n/a in session

- **House of Representatives Report** – Cliff Groth- n/a in session

- **Mayor's Office Report** – n/a

- **Anchorage Police Department** – n/a

- **Anchorage Fire Department** – Joel Wagner, Senior Captain – Downtown Station 1

- goal to attend the Downtown Community Council Meetings
- Fire Department has bond proposals on the upcoming election April 4. Contains: Fire Protection Improvement, replace two fire engines in Anchorage bowl and Eagle River, facility improvements, Public Safety and

Transportation Capital Improvement: radio network upgrades, two additional replacement ambulances, gasoline fuel pumps, Chugiak Fire and Rescue light rescue vehicle.

Chugiak Fire and Rescue – light rescue vehicle

- New Academy in training currently – 18 out of 22 positions covered by a federal grant for three years
- Will have another Academy in 2023 to replace retiring
- A new app called Pulse Point - for everyday people who know CPR. This app on your phone will notify you when someone is in cardiac arrest in your area. Also notifies you where nearest AED is located. Only notifies you in public areas
- Federal funds available – will be doing lot clearing, urban wildlife interface mitigation
- **Anchorage School Board** – n/a
- **Anchorage Downtown Partnership (ADP)** – Radhika Krishna
  - 24 staff clearing snow from the sidewalk, clearing trash from the sidewalks, provide a safety presence downtown, market downtown and sponsor many of the events downtown
  - Publicly thank ACDA, Easy Park for coordinating and helping with snow removal
  - Fur Rendezvous – ADP crews are out overtime helping with extra trash pick-up, switching out trash cans, helping to provide direction to people
  - Sled Dogs downtown maps - fun event during Rondy
  - Putting together summer events schedule: Solstice Celebration, Music in the Park on Wednesdays, Live After Five on Thursdays, 1<sup>st</sup> Fridays Movie in The Park, Saturdays Salsa in the Park, Sundays Market Social in Town Square Park
- **Our Downtown Update** – Kristine Bunnell – n/a
  - Daniel McKenna-Foster – from the planning department of the municipality, reporting - Seward Highway Project PEL – seven proposals being discussed. Some of which involve the downtown area and may not be conducive to the purpose and need. Recommend the DCC stay informed and involved when proposals that involve the downtown area are presented to the public. To stay updated google: Seward PEL or contact Daniel McFoster
- **JBER** – Joy Boston – n/a
- **ACDA** – Melinda Gant - reporting
  - D Street district plan. Public meeting at Anchorage Museum March 3rd 5pm-8pm. Seeking input for the D St and 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. May send input to e-mail: [Ryan.Givens@stantec.com](mailto:Ryan.Givens@stantec.com)
  - 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue Project – project should an 18-month impact on the community. A meeting took place with ACDA, Transit, DCC representatives, Chris Constant, and several business owners downtown. ACDA has reconfirmed to provide additional security, porta potties, trash cans, lighting, benches to the temporary bus transit relocation at JC Penney’s and front of Nordstrom. The experience the businesses had in 2020 at that location will not be repeated. Transit was requested to do a review of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. option. The review has been completed and sent to all the parties. Set relocation date is July 10<sup>th</sup>.
  - Anchorage Mushing district – doing the sled dogs downtown as a fund raiser for raising an arch in cooperation with the city. Asking the city to donate the arch through the 1% for art program. Hope to make it a historical destination.
  - Serving on the Community Council boundaries committee. Next public meeting March 13 at 6:30-8:00pm. In person at the Planning Department or online.
  - Tax Abatement for Downtown was written regarding housing. ACDA has submitted SB# 77 Municipal Property Tax Exemption. To expand the Tax Abatement for Downtown to be statewide and allow all cities to adopt. This would make it 100% tax abatement for all new development projects.
- **Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness**
  - MASH Representative** – Kyle Lavey
    - Working with tenants at the Guest House; focusing on needs, assisting in acquiring jobs. Parks and Rec have visited sharing available jobs as well as the Downtown Hope Center offering job training.
    - Assisting tenants to acquire special assistant programs when needed. This consists in helping to obtain identification, fill out paperwork and submitting it in a timely manner.
    - Employee from “Snap” assistance program comes in every other Friday to assist tenants with signing up

- Individually working on establishing a relationship with the tenants. Some tenants are feeling comfortable and want to live at the Guest House long term.
- Trying to find tenants that fit our criteria for helping them move forward
- **Continuing Business:**
- **Guest House Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) – 20 minutes**
  - **History of the Guest House Memorandum – Silvia Villamides**  
When the Guest house, located on the corner of Cordova and 5<sup>th</sup>, was first being sold/bought the community came to the Downtown Community Council with many concerns. The community members were stating that they didn't want this in their area. There was already a heavy concentration of unsheltered, sheltered and housed homeless in the downtown area.
  - A meeting was held with 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church pastor Matt Schultz, Daniel Volland, members from Rasmuson Foundation, End Homelessness Coalition, members of the Downtown Community Council board and local neighbors.
  - A decision was made to move forward but with a Memorandum of Understanding between the Guest House, the owners and the Downtown Community Council. It was to include the service providers attending the Downtown Community Council meetings to give updates on what was taking place. This MOU was intended in the event of any neighbor having an issue, the council is where they could come and talk about it.
  - In the mean-time the 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church, stepped away from the Guest House and sold to the Anchorage Affordable Housing and Land Trust (AAHHLT)
  - While working through acquiring a MOU we were told that the Guest House was no longer owned by the 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church but now owned by the Anchorage Affordable Housing and Land Trust (AAHLT).
  - At the last meeting while going through the MOU there were signatures for Victor Mollozzi and Sheldon Fisher. The Downtown Community Council was confused and didn't understand why this was happening. It was unknown to the council that Anchorage Affordable Housing and Land Trust (AAHLT) had bought the property. The council was blindsided by this.
  - This brought about the need to have conversation with the owners of the Guest House, Anchorage Affordable Housing and Land Trust (AAHLT)
  - President of the Downtown Community Council, Silvia Villamides, thanked the Anchorage Affordable Housing and Land Trust for attending the meeting; Victor Mollozzi, John Weddleton and Bob Doehl.
  - **Public Comment:**  
**Russ Reno** voiced his opinion about concerns from the very beginning. Described issues in the area; motorhome almost burned down, people sleeping behind and around his building, trash, and needles on the ground. Residents of area needing to pick up the mess. Not feeling safe in his residence nor neighborhood. As stated by Russ Reno; 'We believed in the pastor, I've known him for years and had a really good trust factor there. We followed a process and now the process is done. Things have been done and now we need to work with you (looking at Anchorage Affordable Housing and Land Trust owners) as best as we possibly can. I want to hear more from these people. As a community member we all deserve more.'
  - **Anchorage Affordable Housing and Land Trust (AAHLT)**  
**Victor Mollozzi – how and why the AAHLT was created**
  - AAHLT was created because there was ARPA money available for hotel conversions for affordable housing.
  - Pastor Matt Schultz created the 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Anchorage LLC which allowed the Guest House to be purchased.
  - \$11.8million ARPA funds available for hotel purposes. Assembly gave this to the Rasmuson Foundation. The plan was intended to create a Trust Fund.
  - Created the corporation, attained non-profit status
  - December acquired the interest of the 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Anchorage LLC that owned the Guest House.
  - AAHLT also has closed on Barratt Inn and The Lake Shore. The AAHLT owns three properties, which comprises 271 units. Many units have 2 beds. All our tenants pay rent whether it is by voucher, social security income, or minimum wage job. All our units generate income. It does have overhead costs and requires staffing. We have 8 directors. Our goal is to help people get stabilized, jobs and move on to their own places.  
This is housing, not a shelter.

- The memorandum states that there will not be tenants hanging around outside on the streets. This was a major concern.

**John Weddleton** – talk about issues downtown

- This is very cheap housing, not a shelter. The Guest House fits the Downtown Plan. It is not a flop house, but is workforce housing.

**Bob Doehl** –

- By earning minimum wage, you can't afford a place unless you work 96 hours a week.
- Our success or failure are intertwined. In order for this model to succeed highest priority has to be tenant stabilization.
- Work with tenants that are employable, want to fill the minimum wage jobs, and will follow rules.
- Have rigorous guest policies that keep out other forces that may try to drag the place down.
- For those tenants not willing to follow the rules or are disruptive, use the tools available under the Alaska Landlord Tenant Law and have them go elsewhere.
- When we succeed the off-site impact is that you have more workers available. We're vested in that.
- We are not emergency shelter, we are housing.

**Public Comment:**

**Jason Motyka** – co-owner and founder of 49<sup>th</sup> State Brewing Company.

- 'We have more unskilled workers than most businesses in Anchorage, 220 full time employees, house about 50 of these employees, 120 workers coming in for summer employment. Downtown Anchorage is a tourist-based economy in the summer, if we don't have workforce housing we can't grow the tourism sector. If they are required to provide, 1<sup>st</sup> & last month rent, security deposit and background check the cost is over their heads and they can't acquire housing. The employees live paycheck to paycheck. These people can afford about \$400 a month for housing. We hire people from the Hope Center and Nine Star and they are successful because they have support on the back end.
- Mental health challenges and addiction challenges are very real. This is the biggest challenge for these programs. You can provide housing, but if you're not providing support on the back end to deal with the addiction and mental health issues, they can't hold a job. They can get a job, be there for a month and then walk off one night. Drugs, a problem or mental crisis will cause them to lose that job. The result being they can't afford their housing. How do you make that link up?
- This is a great program you have I would love to have my company have employees going into your place. How can businesses that need workforce housing work with you to utilize this housing?'

**Larry Michael** – 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Radicals

- Applauds all the planning that has gone into this affordable housing and meeting the needs of more vulnerable people.
- What is your ruling on lease holding tenants drinking and using legal drugs on the premises?
- Answered by AAHLT: Room searches looking for substances and well checks are not permissible. If they become loud and/or are disturbing the other residents than action can be taken. Also, anything done in the common area may be dealt with.

**Sheila Powers** – represents a downtown business

- What is the criteria/screening process?
- Answered by Kyle Lavey. Common requirements from the owners: no pets, no history of manufacturing illegal substances, no offenders, able to pay the rent - \$840 a month

**Russ Reno** – downtown resident and business owner

- Several concerns: the impact the Guest House has on downtown; residents living downtown must pay a lot more for housing; the people who own the Guest House live elsewhere in Anchorage and are telling the downtown community why this is so good for them.
- Response from AAHLT. 'Russ your point is well taken. Downtown shouldn't have to be the get and gathering area for the entire municipality. Our next area is Spenard. We are looking to not concentrate in one area. We want to have this community wide. We don't want to create pockets of challenges in one area.'

**Richard Irwin** – Downtown Hope Center

- Appreciates the Guest House sending over tenants for the Feed Me Hope Program at the Downtown Hope Center. Also, for the relationship between the Guest House and Downtown Hope Center, and the housing the Guest House provides.
- There is a need to work together with the challenges. Sitting down and having discussions
- The issue regarding addictions and mental illness has got to be addressed. It's a very difficult issue in our city right now.
- Encouraged Guest House to bring professionally trained people who are skilled in providing those tools for addressing addictions and mental illness to the Guest House.
- President of DTCC, Silvia Villamides, agrees to sign the MOU between Anchorage Affordable Housing and Land Trust and Downtown Community Council.

**Alcohol and Marijuana Committee Update – Silvia Villamides**

- Next meeting (telephonic) March 15
- Gaslight - Had special meeting with the Gaslight Bar owner, John Pattee, regarding incidents happening in the back parking lot and around the area the bar is located. Owner described in detail how they conduct business. They have almost 40 cameras, metal detectors, all certified specialists trained security personnel, follow every rule that there is under the Municipality of Anchorage or State of Alaska license.
- Chris Constant to check with APD regarding the back parking lot that faces 49<sup>th</sup> State Brewing Company and beside the Pioneer Bar to see if that is really the biggest challenge in that area.
- After information comes back from APD, DCC would like to request that police officers be assigned at bar break time to watch for activity.
- Mark Begich purchased the Post Office Mall, the blue building on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Mark Begich is also the owner of the Aviator. He has private security patrolling and filming the area. They are having a lot of problems with the bar across the street from the blue building. Problems include drug abuse and selling of drugs.
- Alcohol and Marijuana Committee will be meeting with Mark Begich and the owner of the Panhandle bar to see if they can work together and move forward.
- **Treasurer Update – Jason Motyka**
  - \$3,425.10 in the account. Recommending to purchase an OWL device, easy to use, plug it into a computer. Would allow for flexibility to include others like our state senators and others that can't attend.
- **New Business: 6minute limit**
- **Draft Resolution 2023-02-01- Protected Bike Lane Pilot Project – Emily Weiser**
  - Trying out protective bike lanes in Anchorage. A barrier between a bike and a car. Much safer. Not wanting to do it permanently without a trial test.
  - Some questions exist about clearing the roads of snow, safety at driveways and intersections.
  - Would like to try this out for a couple of months in the summer to see how it goes and how people like it.
  - Talking with people in Traffic department and DOT.
  - Presenting a draft of a Resolution for consideration of DCC.
  - Locations; A & C, Gamble & Ingra, A street for Northbound and Gamble Street for Southbound, Fireweed, E St. and G St. Possibly two or three would be chosen.
  - **Public Comment:**
    - Question concerning what it would look like.
    - Response by: Emily Weiser- Would mean removing a traffic lane. Barriers could be concrete or planter boxes.
    - Need has been looked at and identified already as a way to connect the Coastal Trail to the downtown businesses and especially to 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave.
    - Concerns that need to be addressed: How does this make an impact on parking, buses, loading zones?
    - Resolution looks too broad. More detail of specific area beginning and ending points. A visual of what this would look like would be helpful. This is a winter city and we need to know how this would work.
    - Request for a presentation at the DCC May 2023 meeting with a visual of what this would look like.
- **Presentations: 6minute limit (3minutes – to speak / 3minutes for questions)**
- **Update on 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. Signals and lighting – Kinney Engineering**

- Next Phase G Street to E Street. Construction is planned for 2025. Wrapping up on design and getting equipment ordered and bids out. Poles are taking a long time. Hopefully construction can be completed in one summer. Have completed the first two Phases. 1<sup>st</sup> Phase A Street to Cordova. Replacing the signals there and putting in pedestrian lights. 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase was from E Street to A Street. Replacing signals and putting more pedestrian lights in. Started putting planters (trees with soil system that expands under the planters) in from E Street to A Street.
- **Update from The Railroad** – Christy Terry
  - May 6, 2023 – Anchorage Community Open House. Learning about the railroad, vendors, short railroad rides, our equipment out for the community to see.
  - Permission from Juneau to bond \$16million for a Seward Dock Project to expand and build the Cruise Ship dock in Seward. Have partnered with Royal Celebrity Tours Cruise Ship Lines and have expanded project to \$150 million project. Current dock was built in 1966 after the earthquake. New dock will be two sided and capable of holding larger Cruise ships. This will double the number of passengers that come in on the ships.
  - Airport depot is designated specifically for traveling tourists. Fastest growing route on the railroad is from Seward to Anchorage’s historical railroad depot.
- **Announcements/Neighbor Comments:** (2minute limit)
  - **ARBRA** – Silvia Villamides  
Anchorage Responsible Beverage Retail Association. Works with the homeless and hires them from the shelters and Rescue Mission to go out and clean the camps, bus stops, and accessible areas around our neighborhoods. John Weddleton helped to develop ARBRA’s very first website. Project Manager is Jonath Rendon. ARBRA is very compassionate and cares about the people and our community.
  - **The Blarney Stone** - Sheila Powers – Old McGinley’s Pub – Has been closed for three years Reopening it and rebranding. An Alaskan Irish Pub. The Blarney Stone to open March 17, 2023, St. Patrick’s Day
  - **Third Avenue Radicals** – Larry Michael, Jim Reknar  
Jim Reknar - Presentation tomorrow from Ed Wesley – on his organization Shiloh.  
Larry Michael -3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Radicals are a grass root organization. Their area falls between DTCC and Fairview Community Council. Common goals of being clean, safe, and vital.

#### **ADJOURN MEETING**

Jason Motyka made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Richard Irwin seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:01pm

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

Andrea McCormick, Secretary of the Downtown Community Council